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Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine Issue 98 (November 2005)

SOUL CALIBUR III

DEMO AND FIRST REVIEW!

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#2 of 4 COLLECTIBLE COVERS

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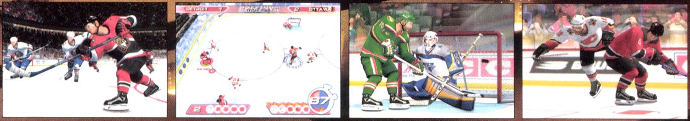

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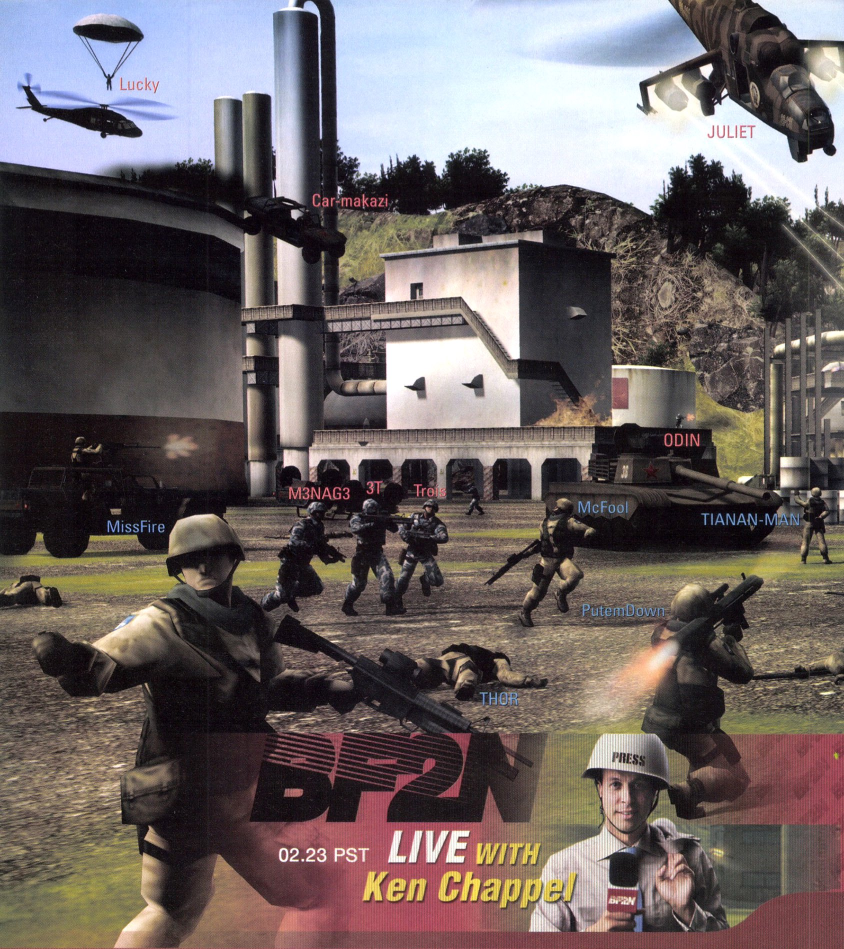
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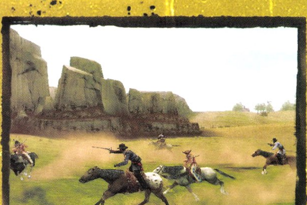
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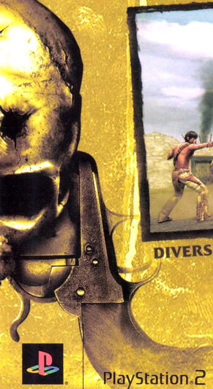

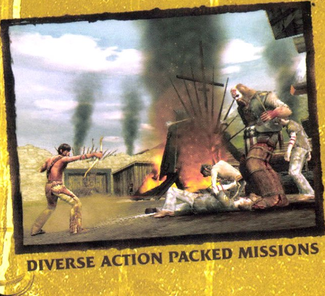

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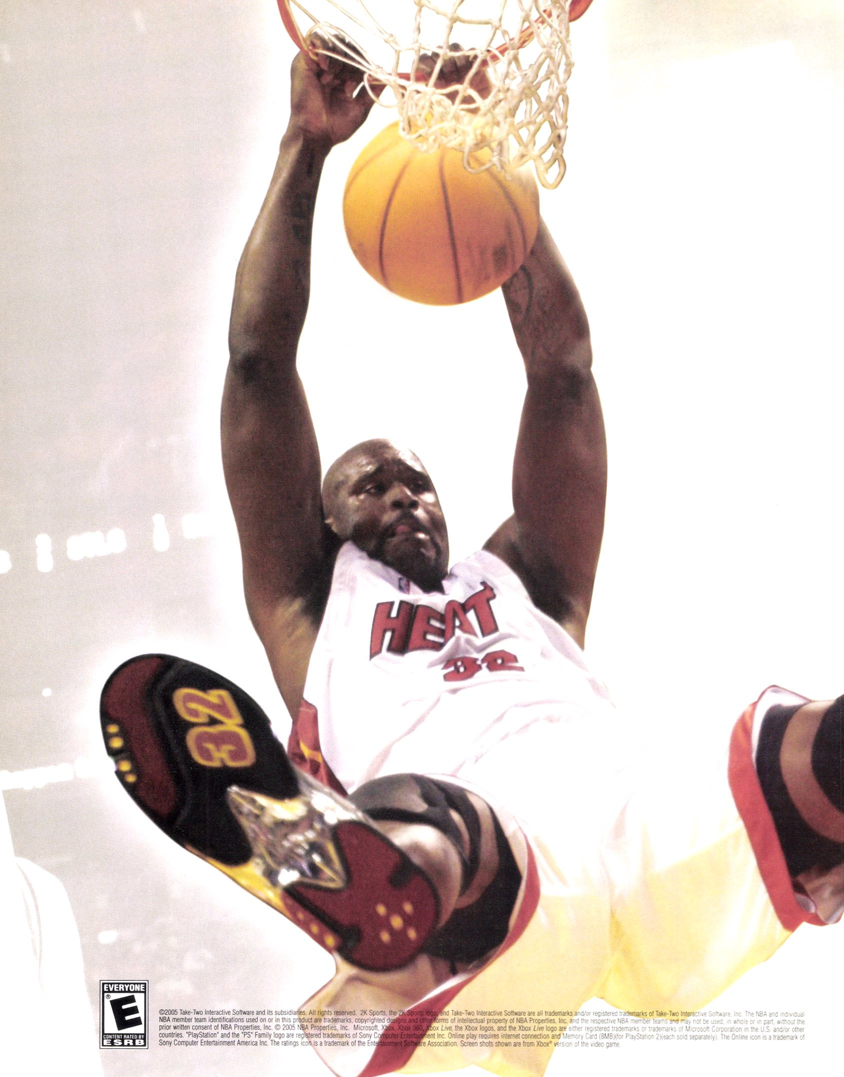

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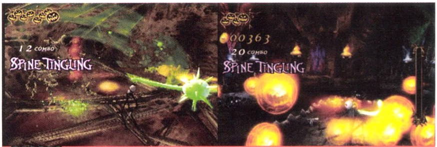


TIM BURTON'S THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS: OOGIE'S REVENGE

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE SOMETHING STRANGE?

Oogie's Revenge is in somewhat of a rough spot. On one hand, fans of the film might claim that this game is a mockery of Tim Burton's masterpiece, while on the other hand, people looking for a quality action-adventure game will scoff at the idea of purchasing a game based on a movie with puppets. Fortunately, both camps will be pleasantly surprised.

Nightmare isn't a spectacular game, but the development team has done an excellent job of capturing the film's style and spirit (pardon the pun). The most integral part of the film—its soundtrack—has been retained; some of the songs have been rewritten for individual boss battles, and they're actually quite good.

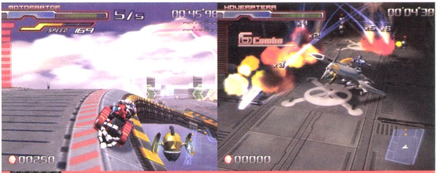
The action in *Nightmare* is very simple, but not so simple that you can just stand in place and mash away on a single button. You have to use some basic combos along with some evasion, and while that may not seem all that complicated, there are times where the action can get plenty hairy. And the boss battles are great, easily the best part of the game. They require more strategy than the typical Skellington-versus-skeleton fight, and the *DDR*-style mechanics play well with the film's musical roots. « *Giancarlo Varanini*

PROS Replicates style of the movie well; mechanics are simple but not totally dumbed down

CONS A little easy even on the hardest difficulty setting; fixed camera

Pub. Capcom **Dev.** Capcom **ESRB** E10+ **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●●◐○]



DICE: DNA INTEGRATED CYBERNETIC ENTERPRISES

WANT A GOOD GAME? NO DICE

Anime games and kids' games are two of the most ghettoized segments of the PS2 library. Each has produced a few gems, but they mostly belch a stream of thick, noxious sludge. *DICE*, which is at the unfortunate intersection of these two genres, has actually collapsed under their corpulence and formed a black hole of suck.

DICE is filled with guys who dress like Power Rangers and dinosaurs that transform into vehicles, allowing for two vastly different but equally incompetent forms of gameplay. Most of the game takes the form of a beat-em-up. Rather than exploring, you typically just stay in a single small area while enemies swarm around you. After you've destroyed a completely arbitrary number of them with your single combo attack or the lock-on laser, you teleport to another room where you get to do it all over again. After five or so areas, you'll fight a boss, and that's the mission.

Even worse are the game's racing segments, seemingly designed without the benefit of an even vague understanding of vehicle physics.

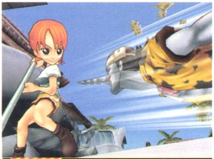
Since the game is based on an anime, you'd expect something of a compelling story. No such luck. Between missions, you get only soporific briefings. *DICE* is so utterly amateurish it's almost depressing. Stay very, very far away. « *Christian Nutt*

VERDICT An obvious attempt to cash in on a cartoon, it utterly lacks competence yet doesn't manage to be so bad that it's funny.

Pub. Bandai **Dev.** Natsume **ESRB** E **MSRP** $29.99

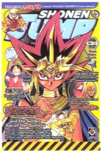
RATING [◐○○○○]

Without its subtitle, *DICE*'s name makes little sense, as the show has nothing to do with dice or gambling of any sort. The Japanese title, *Dinobreaker*, is better, as the game does, in fact, have something to do with dinosaurs breaking things.



ONE PIECE: GRAND BATTLE

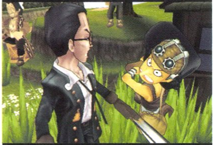
ANIME PIRATES KICK BOOTY



The *One Piece* comic currently runs in *Shonen Jump*, the same magazine that birthed the hit *Dragon Ball* manga. *Shonen Jump* is currently the biggest-selling periodical comic book in the United States.

Though anime games are often weak (see the review of *DICE* at the left), sometimes—whether it's because the developer in question really gets and likes the license or because there's just something irrepressibly fun about it—they work. I'd guess that both of these elements came into play when developer Ganbarion set out to create *One Piece: Grand Battle*.

Full of bizarre, exaggerated, and wacky characters, the game plays like a cross between a traditional fighting game and a *Smash Bros.* wannabe. Basically, there's a core of real fighting-game mechanics that underpins the action: play control, juggles, guarding, combos, and air attacks are all present and correct. But the game isn't trying to appeal to hardcore fighter fans and eschews strategy in favor of outlandish special moves and crazy arena designs.



My favorite level is the park with a giant amphibious cow as its centerpiece. You can run and jump everywhere in the levels—yes, including on top of the cow's head—and the game becomes about dodging and weaving as much as it is about combat. There are features in the levels you can use to your advantage—say, a rolling log you can hit toward your opponent. Add in a variety of random weapons and you've got a lot of mayhem.

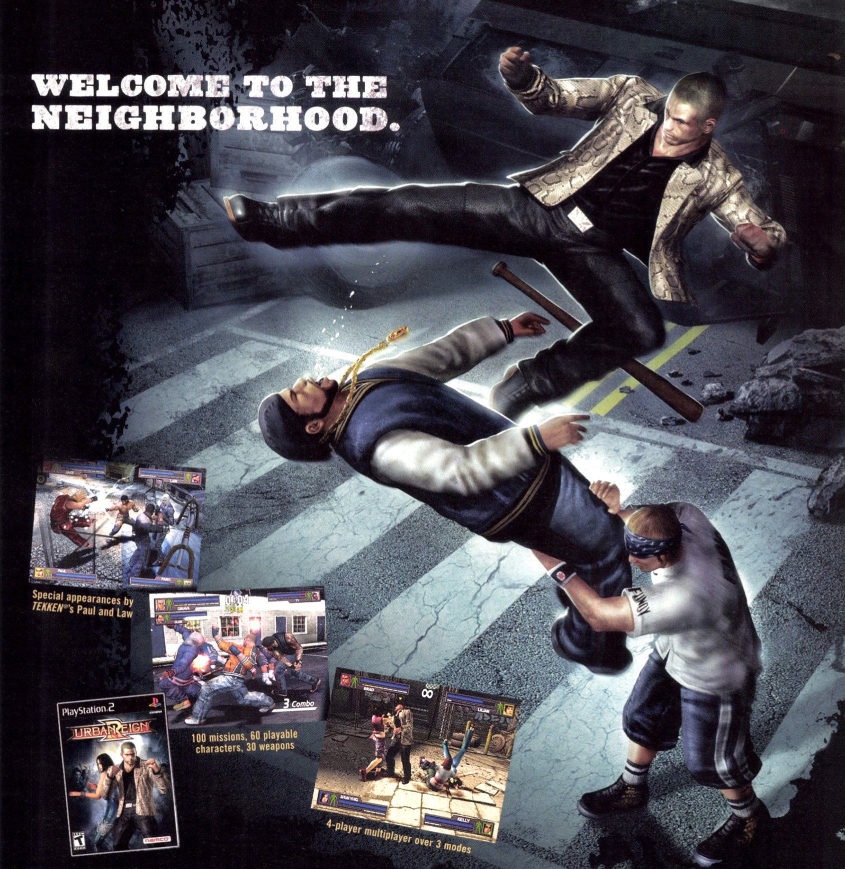
In fact, the most disappointing thing about *One Piece* is that it's limited to two players. If four could fight, it could have been the best party fighter for the PS2. As it is, it's an entertaining fighter that should provide laughs, whether or not you actually care about the source material. That's probably the best compliment a licensed game can hope for. « *Christian Nutt*

VERDICT The mix of traditional core mechanics and all-out wackiness should propel it near the top of the heap. It's a very solid effort, particularly when compared to most anime fighters.

Pub. Bandai **Dev.** Ganbarion **ESRB** T **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●●◐○]

WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD.



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GUITAR HERO

THE SCHOOL OF ROCK IS IN SESSION

I play guitar. I'm not very good—strictly rhythm—but I do play. And when I learned that the United States was finally getting a game in the vein of Konami's fantastically entertaining *Guitar Freaks* (which, inexplicably, the company never opted to bring here), I was thrilled. So it's a great joy to be able to say that *Guitar Hero* meets—no, exceeds—my high expectations.

First off, let's talk about the ridiculously awesome lineup of songs. The developer (Harmonix, which you no doubt remember from *Frequency* and *Karaoke Revolution*) put together a top-notch cross section of guitar rock. Ranging from old-school punk (the Ramones) to cutting-edge alt-rock (Franz Ferdinand), this is a good 30 years' worth of guitar classics. My only complaint here is that the lineup is a bit heavy on classic rock (ZZ Top, Boston, Sabbath, Deep Purple, David Bowie) and a bit light on modern stuff, which is primarily represented by Franz Ferdinand, Queens of the Stone Age, and the Donnas.

More important, though, is how these songs play. I'm shocked by how much playing this game feels like playing guitar. Oh, on the easier levels the playing is, of course, vastly simplified. But check this out: In the entire 30-song lineup, there are only two songs I've ever played on a real guitar. On the expert level, I was able to play through both songs on the first or second try. I couldn't get past the first quarter or so of any other song. This should tell you something about how playing this game compares to really playing the guitar.

In fact, it's so similar that anyone who does play guitar is likely to find the easiest levels much too simple. And yet, some of the more advanced songs, even on the easy setting, may be too challenging for someone who's never picked up a guitar. So it would have been nice to have a smoother difficulty ramp, and perhaps even one easier setting for absolute newbies, to give 'em a chance to hit a few chords, whale on the absolutely awesome whammy bar, and get totally hooked. (The whammy bar was a special treat for me, since I only have guitars without them. Strictly rhythm, remember? Who do I look like, Steve Vai?)

It also would have been nice if the game had included a few more modes in addition to quick play, career, and two player. (A practice mode, for example, would be most welcome.) But when it really comes down to it, what this game's about is no-frills rocking. And no-frills rocking is something it does very, very well. More, please. « *Joe Rybicki*

PROS Fantastic song list, great guitar-playing feel, substantial challenge for newcomers and guitar gods alike

CONS Perhaps too much of a challenge for newbies, very no-frills presentation

Pub. RedOctane **Dev.** Harmonix **ESRB** RP **MSRP** $69.99

RATING [●●●●◐]

AX-TASTIC

RedOctane recently announced a licensing deal with Gibson Guitars to feature Gibsons in *Guitar Hero*. The lineup includes the Les Paul Standard, Les Paul Special, V-Factor (aka Flying V), X-plorer, Firebird, ES-335, and SG (on which the controller is modeled)—plus, apparently, a few unlockable models.

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SASSE
DANTE
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STACEY
BUD

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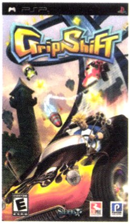

CHOOSE from six different characters, customize a range of vehicles, and race through more than 100 levels loaded with multiple routes, shortcuts, jumps, dips, perilous curves, and loop-de-loops. Zip and soar through four different 3D environments, from jungle worlds to icy racetracks to horror-themed courses, collecting power-ups and avoiding GripShift's fearsome traps. Drop the pedal to the metal, but remember to plot your course wisely—one wrong turn or missed jump and you'll be plummeting to your doom or eating the other racers' dust.

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PlayStation Portable

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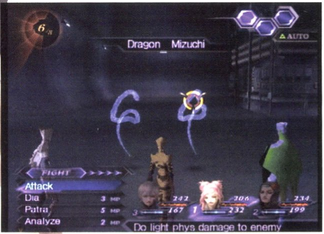
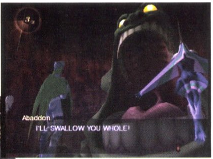
I became his guardian after his father died



Do light phys damage to enemy



Abaddon
I'LL SWALLOW YOU WHOLE!

All alone dis time? Where's your buddies?

SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI: DIGITAL DEVIL SAGA 2

NOW PRESENTING ACT II, BUT FIRST, $50 PLEASE

Whoever Mr. Atlus is, he probably never thought he'd be in a situation similar to Quentin Tarantino's. That is, both Tarantino and the folks at Atlus had a huge experience, cut it in half, and released each part separately. And like *Kill Bill Vol. 2*, *Digital Devil Saga 2* not only continues the story established in the first volume, but also remains a fairly stand-alone experience (*DDS2* tells you everything you need to know along the way). In fact, the game is better than its predecessor, improving both the story (significantly) and the gameplay (incrementally).

While the original *DDS* was about Serph (the leader of the Embryon tribe, and the main character) and his buddies journeying to Nirvana, *DDS2* opens by revealing what Nirvana actually is (a place where sunlight turns you into stone) and then starts piling on the character-based drama. For those who want more story in their RPGs, *DDS2* has got it in spades. *DDS* was mostly about establishing the characters and the game world, and hence, not very much actually happened. Now that the framework has been laid with *DDS, DDS2* focuses on completely dismantling it by way of crazy plot twists, surprising character revelations, and questionable ethics. The sheer originality of the *DDS* universe, combined with the well-written and executed script, makes *DDS2* one of the best RPG stories of the year.

A few tweaks change the gameplay for the better. The harsh difficulty that Atlus games are known for is alleviated somewhat by the much more frequent appearances of save terminals. The Mantra system (how you learn new spells and skills) is now a giant hexagon that you slowly unlock by learning skills—making it more like *FFX*'s sphere grid than what was found in the previous game. There's a new "half-demon" mode, in which you're occasionally forced into a half-demon transformation that ups your damage dealing (enemies can be killed in a couple of hits) and experience/money gain. But it also severely weakens you, so you have to decide if it's worth risking death to get the extra XP and cash.

As good as these gameplay tweaks are, they're still just tweaks. *DDS2* does a pretty good job of standing on its own, but it still ultimately feels like the second half of a big book, rather than a full sequel. As such, many of the elements that one may like or dislike are repeated here. (I'm not a big fan of the high random-encounter rate, and the instant-death abilities are still really annoying. Also, enemies are still recycled from *SMT3: Nocturne*.) But, despite its serialized nature and still-harsh difficulty, the utterly original story and universe along with the solid and quirky combat make *DDS2* a worthy game for any RPG fan. « *Thierry Nguyen*

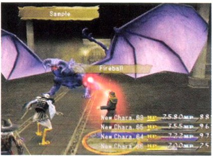
GOOD KARMA It's a continuation of the previous game, only better

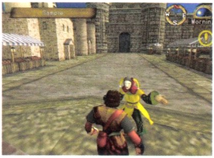
BAD KARMA It's still a continuation of the previous game

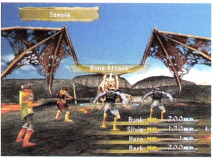
Pub. Atlus **Dev.** Atlus **ESRB** M **MSRP** $49.99

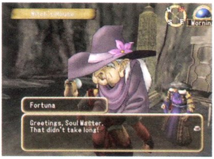
RATING [●●●●○]

If you asked me to rate the whole package (*DDS* and *DDS2* together), I'd give it a 4.5, just because you get a whole lotta game and a pretty epic story to boot, which is what you're looking for in an RPG.



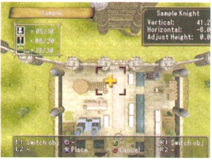


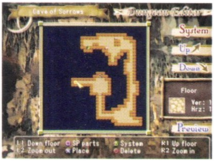




Fortuna

Greetings, Soul Master.
That didn't take long!





RPG MAKER 3

LIMITED ONLY BY YOUR IMAGINATION...AND YOUR FREE TIME

Seeing how Square Enix keeps delaying the release of *Final Fantasy XII*, hit point–starved gamers might just have to take matters into their own hands. Agetec's latest role-playing-game construction kit, *RPG Maker 3*, might not be powerful enough to forge something of a *FF* caliber, but with a little effort, a modicum of ingenuity, and a lot of free time, you can surely make something better than, say, *Unlimited Saga*.

If you've ever dabbled with the previous *RPG Maker* titles, you'll be impressed by how user-friendly the interface has become. In a scant hour, you can have a bare-bones game up and running: Map creation is quick and dirty with a new 3D interface, assembling towns and dungeons from a stable of available pieces is a snap, and populating the world with monsters takes only a few seconds. But then again, if you form your game from all the preset libraries, you'll end up with a fully functional, utterly generic 3D role-playing game.

Customizing your adventure requires a far greater investment of time and effort. If you're a 12-year-old with an empty social calendar, painstakingly typing thousands of pages of dialogue, slowly designing original spell effects, and editing cut-scenes might sound enjoyable, but the average PS2 owner can probably spend those 200 hours on something a little sexier.

Oddly, the developers failed to include one aspect of the previous *RPG Maker* titles that users really enjoyed—a premade RPG quest that showcases just how utterly bizarre, funny, and ambitious your homemade adventures can be. Agetec promises a thriving Web community for the exchange of fan-made games, but the inclusion of a killer quest on the disc would have been sweet.

Ultimately, if you're among the relatively miniscule slice of the console gaming world who'd actually spend the time to plan his or her own RPG, you'll get a great deal out of *RPG Maker 3*. It's certainly not perfect, but it's the best version of the constantly improving toolkit to date. Plus, it's a reason to use that HDD that's been patiently waiting inside your PS2 for months..... « *Shane Bettenhausen*

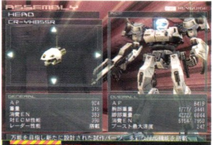
VERDICT While much more user-friendly than previous iterations, *RPG Maker 3* is still a hell of a lot of work.

Pub. Agetec **Dev.** Enterbrain **ESRB** E **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●○○]

Adventure Construction Set

RPG Maker 3 is merely the latest in an illustrious line of products to put game design in the hands of the hoi polloi. While modern gamers may be familiar with Agetec's own *Fighter Maker*, the roll-your-own genre goes all the way back to 1985's *Adventure Construction Set* from EA.



ARMORED CORE: NINE BREAKER

MECHA PILOTING APTITUDE TEST

If you can't tell the difference between a furuna radiator and a ragora radiator, then you'd best step away from this game. Similar to how *Gran Turismo* is an intimidating title designed for car enthusiasts, *Armored Core: Nine Breaker* is a game designed for mecha enthusiasts.

Previous *Armored Core* titles have been third-person mecha-action affairs with a layer of story to keep the player motivated. That last part doesn't apply to *AC: Nine Breaker*. There is absolutely no story here, just pure combat and training. You outfit your mech, take it on test runs, and then go on arena fights to earn arena points, which can be spent to modify your armored core. There's a ton of training scenarios, covering everything from simple target practice to making sure your armored core has enough heat resistance.

I use the word "training" loosely—rather than functioning as a trainer for *AC* newbies, these exercises require the player to already be somewhat skilled at the game.

The graphics are passable, and for the controls, you can switch between classic D-pad style or *AC: Nexus* style, which uses analog sticks. If you're new to the franchise, it can take a few test matches just to get oriented, and even these can test your patience.

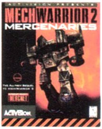
Supposedly, *AC: Nine Breaker* was designed for newbies, but its cold, sterile presentation and crazy list of components for the armored core itself make it, in reality, a game for veteran *AC* gearheads who want to talk shop about what chassis goes well with what head and then test their armored cores in some splitscreen. Then again, *Gran Turismo* isn't made for everyone either. « *Thierry Nguyen*

TRANSFORMERS It's pure mecha combat with tons of gadgets and skill exercises

GOBOTS It's not much more than that

Pub. Agetec **Dev.** From Software **ESRB** T **MSRP** $39.99

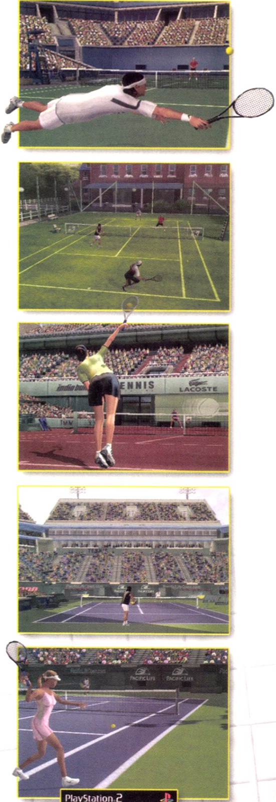
RATING [●●◐○○]



Disagree all you want, but we think the best mech game EVER is *MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries* for the PC. If you limit us to the PS2, we'd say *Zone of the Enders: The 2nd Runner*.

#1 on the tour.

"One of the best tennis games ever created is finally coming to the PS2."
PSM



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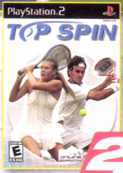

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

PlayStation®2

ONLINE
BROADBAND ONLY

2K SPORTS

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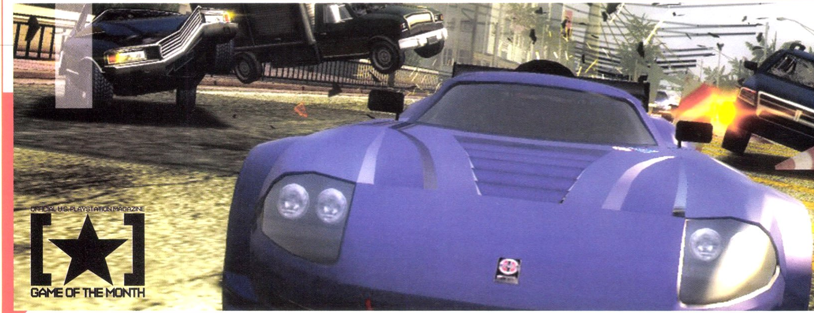
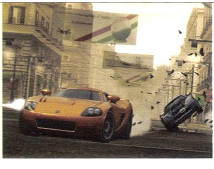
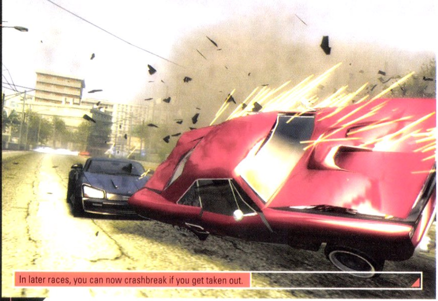
BURNOUT REVENGE


OFFICIAL U.S. PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE
GAME OF THE MONTH

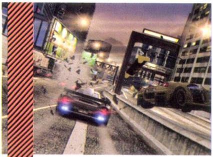
STILL KING OF THE ROAD

QUICK START
If you still have a *Burnout 3* save on your memory card, hang onto it—it will boost your initial Revenge rank when you start *Burnout Revenge.*





In later races, you can now crashbreak if you get taken out.



REVENGE RANKS

In the new world of *Burnout*, one of the most important things will be how aggressively you hit the road. Below is the list of ranks, from highest to lowest.

- ELITE
- DOMINATOR
- ASSASSIN
- MANIAC
- INSANE
- DANGEROUS
- OFFENSIVE
- RECKLESS
- UNSAFE
- HARMLESS

I do not like racing games. I don't care how many cars are included, realistic physics spell instant doom for any vehicle I'm navigating, and spending time in the garage tuning bores me to tears.

When *Burnout 3* came out last fall, however, I fell in love. Taking out cars, driving like a maniac, and wreaking general mayhem definitely appealed to a basic human urge to destroy things. And I wasn't alone: Dozens of my non-videogame-playing friends got sucked in, and we'd pass a controller around the room for hours at a time.

So the advent of *Burnout Revenge* is something I've both anticipated and dreaded. Obviously, it's always awesome to see if a studio whose work you respect can surpass prior efforts. But it would be impossible for Criterion to duplicate what it did last year; at least part of the game's impact was that we didn't see it coming. *Burnout 3* was *OPM*'s Game of the Year for 2004—could Criterion top it?

Amazingly, it has. By making a few seemingly subtle but ultimately profound gameplay changes, Criterion has improved a game we didn't think needed improving. The very first thing you will notice about *Burnout Revenge* is that the graphics are unbelievable, and these good looks help to showcase the new tracks, which have tons of shortcuts and ramps and tunnels. You could spend hours just learning the ins and outs of the courses.

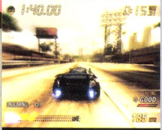
One of the next things you'll notice is that the ratings system has changed. Though that may initially appear to be a cosmetic detail, it's actually one of the most fundamental changes to the game. You still need to get a medal (bronze, silver, or gold) in order to "pass" the race, but now your overall score is determined largely by the way you drive. As you might have guessed, aggressiveness is what you have to shoot for: It's to your advantage to use ramps to get good air, take down rivals, and boost constantly. At the end of each race, you'll be given from one (OK) to four (awesome) stars based on just how much of a jackass you managed to be, and the medals are the icing on the cake. A gold medal awards an extra star, a silver leaves you the same, and a bronze takes a star away.

The sheer beauty of this—and the biggest improvement of *Revenge* over *Burnout 3*—is that the game has morphed from a race for the finish line into something that's much more strategic. Sure, that shortcut might put you way out in front of everyone else, but it also means you won't have other cars around to take down, which could lower your overall rating. You're constantly having to gauge how you're doing and decide which will pay off more in the long run, rubbing and grinding with the contestants or shooting off ahead on your own.

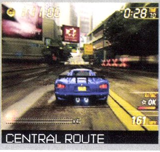
Star accumulation leads to level unlocking. The game is pretty generous with the stars, which means that there are usually multiple levels unlocked at any one point. The awesome result is that you have a large number of events to choose from

> I'VE BOTH ANTICIPATED AND DREADED THIS.

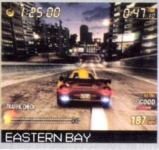
THE LOCATIONS



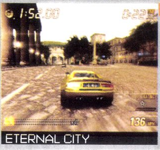
ANGEL VALLEY



CENTRAL ROUTE



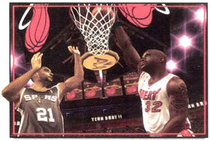
EASTERN BAY



ETERNAL CITY

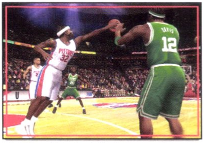
Dominate the:

☐ PAINT
☐ BACKCOURT
☐ PERIMETER
☒ ALL OF THE ABOVE

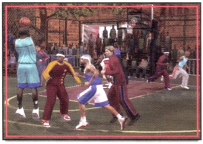


Pull off runners, fade-aways, finger rolls and dunks with the hot new *Shot Stick*.

Set up alley-oops, give and gos, or kick it out for the open three with *Dual Player Control*.



Fight for rebounds, deflect passes and go for steals with new *Strip n Rip System* controls.



Become a real "playa" and take your game to the streets at the legendary *Entertainer's Basketball Classic* at Rucker Park in Harlem.

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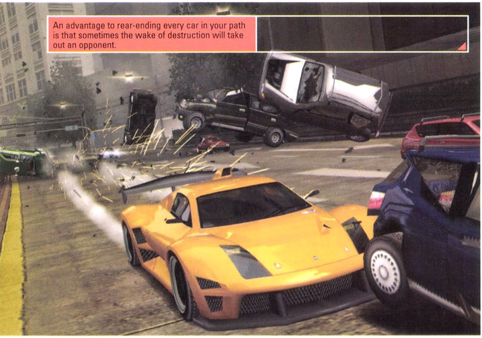


An advantage to rear-ending every car in your path is that sometimes the wake of destruction will take out an opponent.

RACING WAS JUST THAT MUCH MORE FUN.

each time, so you can get away with playing the events you enjoy and still unlock most of the game. However, those who were not fans of crash mode need to know that all the events are tied up into a single path this time, so even though you won't need to play *everything* to progress in the game, you will probably have to complete at least a few crash junctions in order to get to all of the racing.

The game's other significant change is the ability to check traffic. Instead of needing to avoid all nonracing vehicles, as you did in previous iterations, you can actually rear-end traffic (other than semis and buses) going the same direction as you and ricochet cars off of other objects to take out other opponents. It's rather like playing a huge game of pinball.

Checking traffic becomes incredibly important in the game's new mode, traffic attack. Think of it as a combination of road rage and crash mode: Your goal is to hurtle down the road and cause as much mayhem as you can by hitting as many cars in your path as possible. It's insanely addictive, but it's also surprisingly difficult at times. My brain has gotten so used to veering around vehicles that even when I was barreling down the road shooting for that SUV in front of me, I couldn't always stop my left thumb from swerving around at the last second.

The *Burnout 3* racing modes are all still here, although most of them have seen tweaks. The most improved award goes to eliminator, which is now based on time (the last-place car gets eliminated every 30 seconds) rather than laps, giving it a good shot of adrenaline and speeding up the proceedings immeasurably. Also, an awesome addition is that in later levels you can crashbreak if you get taken out in a race. Be judicious with it, however; if you use crashbreaker and fail to take out any rivals, you'll lose all the boost you had built up.

Crash mode has received the biggest overhaul. Gone are the multipliers and speed boosts from *Burnout 3*; in their place are multiple jumps, intersections, and crashbreakers. In keeping with the golf metaphor that Criterion said it was shooting for, you now start the mode with a swing meter similar to that of golf games, clicking the X button at the top and bottom of the swing. (In junctions where you're launching into the air, there's even a wind sock indicator in the corner of the screen.) The number of cars that crash adds to your crashbreaker meter, and each time you fill up the meter, you extend your overall time.

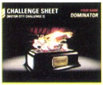
For the most part, I like the changes made to crash mode. However, what I do *not* like is that you are no longer in control of your speed, which means that on the complicated junctions, the challenge often becomes getting to the crash site rather than causing a big crash. There were junctions that took me more than 30 tries to even get to the main intersection, to say nothing of actually crashing *well*. Happily, however, I didn't need to lean on crash as much as I tended to in the last game because racing was just that much more fun to me.

It's tough making a sequel to an awesome game that doesn't leave fans disappointed. However, *Burnout Revenge* is the better game, even if not for the reasons I anticipated. And while I may miss individual elements of *Burnout 3*, it would be impossible to go back to it—and that's a good thing. « *Dana Jongewaard*

VERDICT As awesome as a 137-car pileup with $24 million of damage.

Pub. EA Games **Dev.** Criterion **ESRB** T **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●●●]



AWARD-WINNING PERFORMANCE

One of my favorite touches is the addition of new trophies. Each location offers the same eight rewards; when you reap one, you get silver and gold metallic vehicles providing a full-on reenactment of the type of event you completed, culminating in a trophy. Above is a picture of the trophy awarded for a vertical takedown.

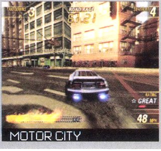
5 WAYS BURNOUT REVENGE IS BETTER THAN BURNOUT 3

1. Checking traffic
2. Crashbreaker races
3. Better-looking cars
4. Layered tracks
5. Skippable training videos

THE LOCATIONS

1:25.00
1:13
AWESOME
194

LONE PEAK



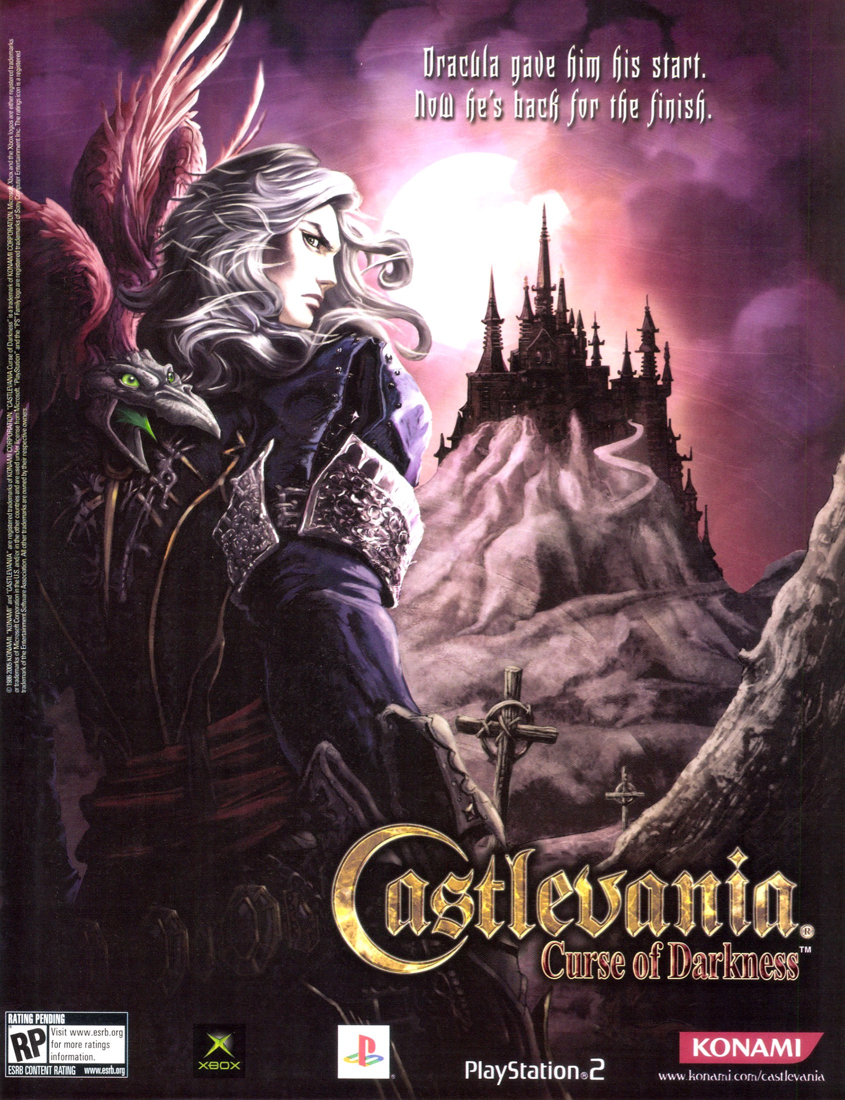
MOTOR CITY

1:35.00
0:01
86

SUNSHINE KEYS

0:26
TRAFFIC CHECK
GOOD
138

WHITE MOUNTAIN


Dracula gave him his start.
Now he's back for the finish.
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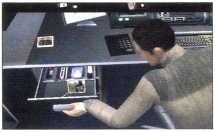

INDIGO PROPHECY

LIKE NOTHING YOU'VE PLAYED BEFORE

A drama that begins with a brutal murder is not all that unusual. But when that drama is a videogame and *you* are the murderer—well, that's something you don't see every day. But this is the setup for *Indigo Prophecy*, one of the most profoundly imaginative games I've ever played.

The game is presented like a film, down to the multiple points of view, allowing you to explore the same story from drastically different perspectives. Your first character is Lucas Kane, the aforementioned murderer, who is a victim of a sort of possession. Your initial goal is to flee the scene before the body is discovered. Having accomplished that, your perspective shifts to Carla Valenti and Tyler Miles, the detective team investigating the murder. This is where things start to get odd: In a sense, you're playing a cat-and-mouse game against yourself, fleeing the police as Lucas while attempting to get to the bottom of the murder as Carla and Tyler. The story quickly blossoms from an occultish detective story to a truly bizarre saga of a frigid apocalypse.

If you think this might get confusing, you're half right. Writer/director David Cage does an admirable job of keeping all the balls in the air until the final act, when everything starts to come apart from sheer momentum, and a number of bizarre vectors are introduced *ex machina*. But a strange ending is not the primary problem.

That honor goes to the infuriating movement system, which conspires with the dramatic camera to draw you violently out of the experience. The rest of the controls are quite innovative: Gestures on the right analog stick take the place of tapping buttons, for example, and *Shenmue*-style "physical action reaction" sequences allow you to participate in what would be prerendered cinemas in any other game. But just walking around, finding items that can be interacted with—especially during the frequent timed segments—can get so incredibly irritating and intrusive that I had to deduct three quarters of point just for that, plus another quarter-point for the loopy ending.

Do the math and you can figure out what I think of the rest of the game. Bottom line: If you have an adventure-loving bone in your body, you owe it to yourself to play *Indigo Prophecy*. « *Joe Rybicki*

VERDICT A brilliant drama that's only slightly damaged by irritating controls and a messy ending.

Pub. Atari **Dev.** Quantic Dream **ESRB** M **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●●●○]

PlayStation
PlayStation 2

PLAY IT

Check out *Indigo Prophecy* on this month's disc. The demo lets you replay the opening sequence as often as you'd like, so you can explore how Lucas' actions will affect the story.

FAMILY PLOT

Sam the undead midget is voiced by director Sam Raimi's brother Ted, who is the only actor besides Bruce Campbell to star in both *Evil Dead* and *Evil Dead II*. He was also baby-sat by Bruce as a child.

EVIL DEAD REGENERATION

BRINGS THE SERIES BACK TO LIFE

"Chris, do you want to review this game? You get to kick an undead midget." Well, sign me up. Of course, then they told me it was an *Evil Dead* game, which scared me, as the last two were pretty much unplayable crap. But guess what? *Regeneration* isn't bad at all. It's no gameplay revolution, but it's a solid third-person adventure.

Even if you're not a fan of the cult-classic horror series, you probably know that Bruce Campbell shot to fame in *Evil Dead* as Ash, the wisecracking, chain-saw-armed killer of undead legions. *Regeneration* picks up where the second film in the trilogy left off, with Ash (voiced by Campbell, natch) busting out of a mental hospital.

To do that, he's got his trusty chain saw and shotgun. You can alternate between them to create some nasty combos, and you've got to find the combination moves that best dismember each enemy. Collect enough evil enemy essence and you can turn into the superpowered Evil Ash, then plow through enemies like they were warm butter. Warm, undead butter.

And then there's Sam, a living-dead midget who follows Ash around, engages in playful banter with him, and attacks enemies. You can let him go off on his own in battle, or you can tap the Up directional button to kick him in any direction you want. Kicking Sam is key to solving puzzles as well as defeating many of the boss monsters, who tend to defend themselves quite well unless they have a midget punching them in the head.

The lack of a quick-continue option is annoying, as is the aiming system, which uses a confusing combination of the R1 trigger and the right analog stick. But these minor points aside, *Regeneration* is, finally, a solid videogame version of the beloved films. Hail to the king, baby. « *Chris Kohler*

LIVING I love Sam. And the chain saw
DEAD Aiming system could use more polish

Pub. THQ **Dev.** Cranky Pants **ESRB** M **MSRP** $19.99

RATING [●●●◐○]

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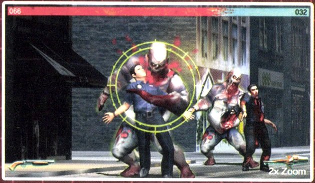
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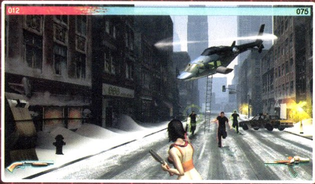

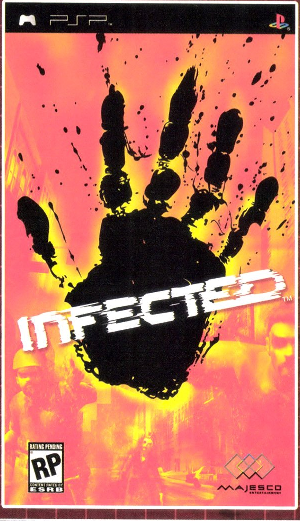
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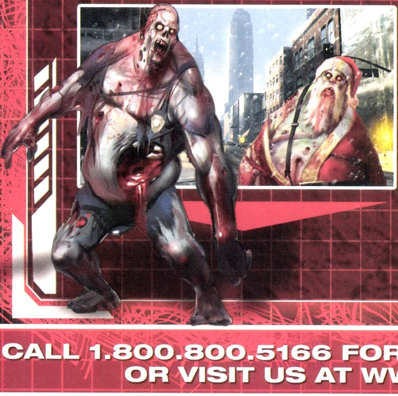

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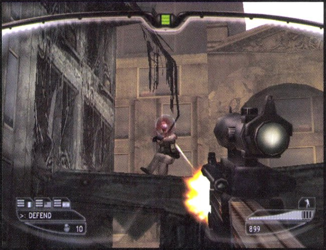
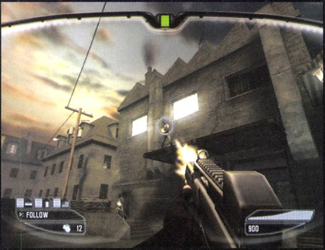
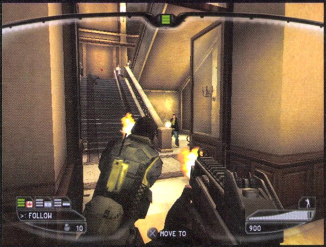
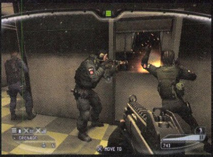
RAINBOW SIX: LOCKDOWN

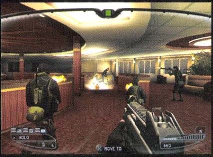
SPECTACULARLY COMPETENT











Oh, that crazy Rainbow Team, always getting into zany adventures. This time around the squad is going up against a millionaire who, apparently, has gotten tired of buying fancy cars and houses and has started dreaming bigger dreams of gassing people with neurotoxins. Anything to fill the long hours, I suppose.

Anyway, the real trouble is that he's executing his nefarious schemes with the help of an organization with as much training as the Rainbow Team itself, so things are a little hairier for our intrepid band this time around. A little, but not a lot. And this leads to one of the fundamental conundrums of these newfangled tactical shooters: difficulty, and the lack thereof.

See, if you're ordering around a group of computer-controlled teammates, they can't be too dumb, or they get in the way. But they can't be too smart, or they take most of the challenge off the player. It's very, very difficult—perhaps impossible—to get the balance right.

To *Lockdown*'s credit, it does try awfully hard to walk that line. Ordering your teammates to breach and clear a room, for example, is usually smooth as silk. If there are one or two enemies in plain view, you can do it all day long and few (if any) members of your team will take more than a couple bullets. But put your people in a position where they need to deal with enemies popping in and out of cover or arrayed in hiding spots all throughout an irregularly shaped room, and they seem to get confused pretty quickly. It's always perplexing to see your team enter a room in textbook formation, instantly take out two enemies hiding behind file cabinets in the corners, but then fail to notice, react to, or dispatch the third guy who's dancing the Lindy Hop and singing "Mandy" atop a dining table under a spotlight in the middle of the room.

Still, *Lockdown* is solid enough FPS fare, and smarter than most, with nicely varied missions and a very, very slick presentation. The clever multiplayer features don't hurt either. While the game boasts only three game types (deathmatch, capture the flag, and a variant of the zone-control game that the kids are into) and nine maps, *Lockdown* takes a cue from the *Splinter Cell* series and gives each side different gear, which adds a certain depth.

Basically, this should be just about what you've come to expect from a *Rainbow Six* title on PS2: steel-eyed competence, but not a whole lot of flash. « *Joe Rybicki*

PROS When it works right, the tactical element is exemplary; plus, there's some real depth to multiplayer

CONS When the tactical element doesn't work right, it's pretty jarring

Pub. Ubisoft **Dev.** Red Storm **ESRB** M **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●◐○]

GET YOUR FACE SHOT OFF

Lockdown includes a simple character-design feature that lets you customize the appearance of your character for multiplayer matches. You can even adjust small facial details...though it's not likely others will see them in the heat of online action.

"IT'S THE KILLER APP WE'VE ALL BEEN WAITING FOR."

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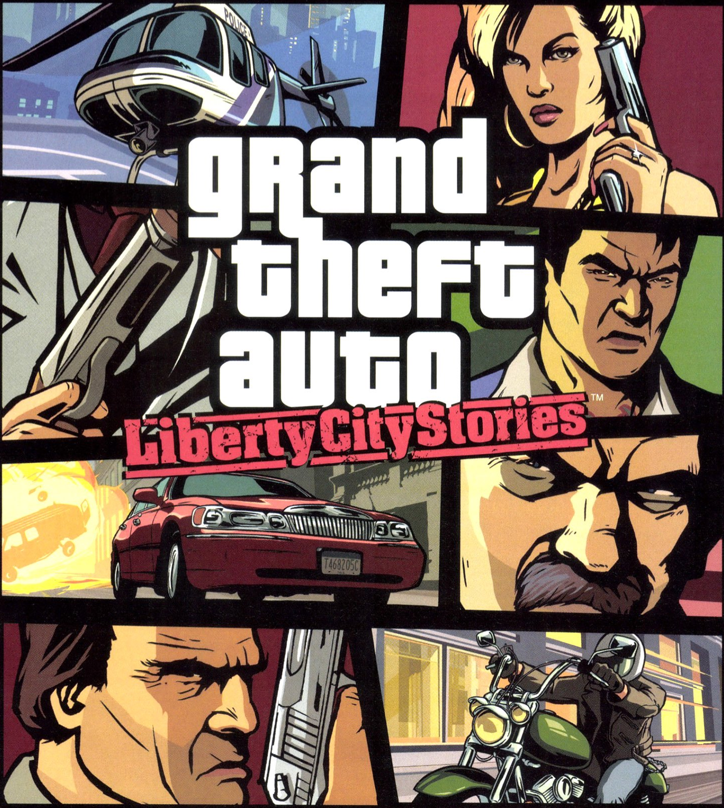

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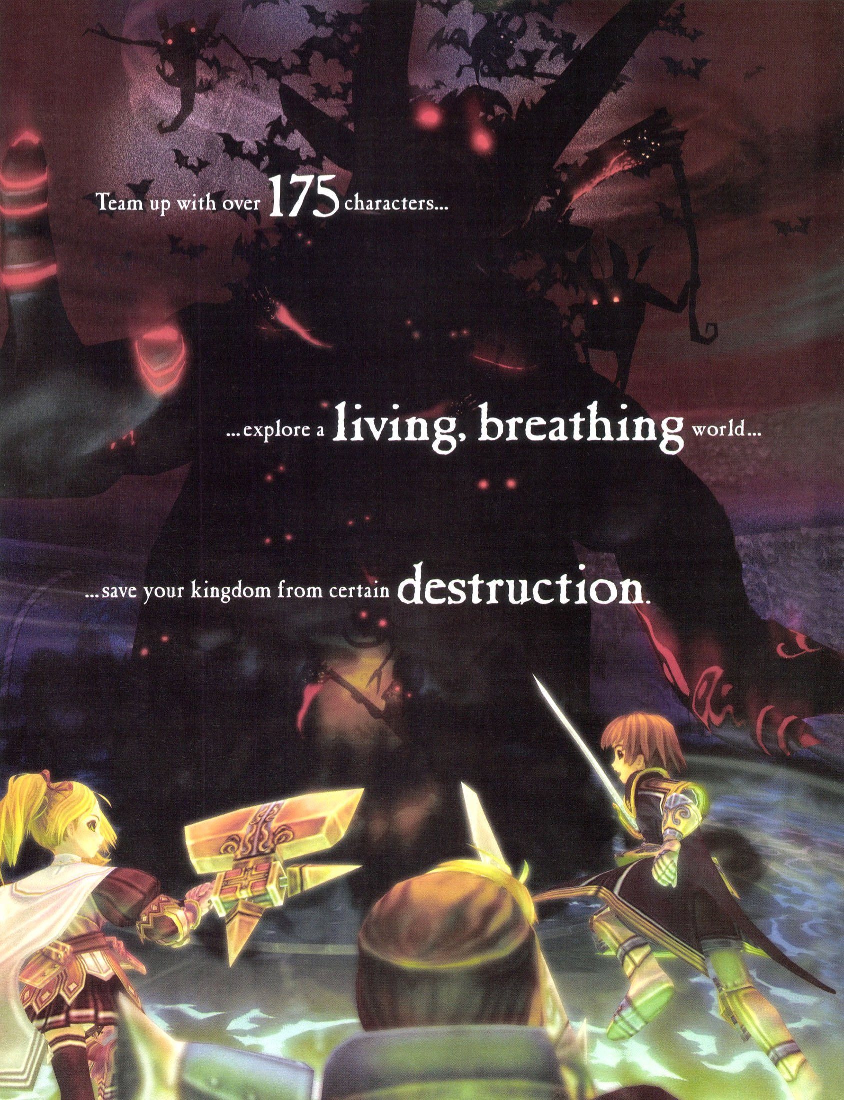
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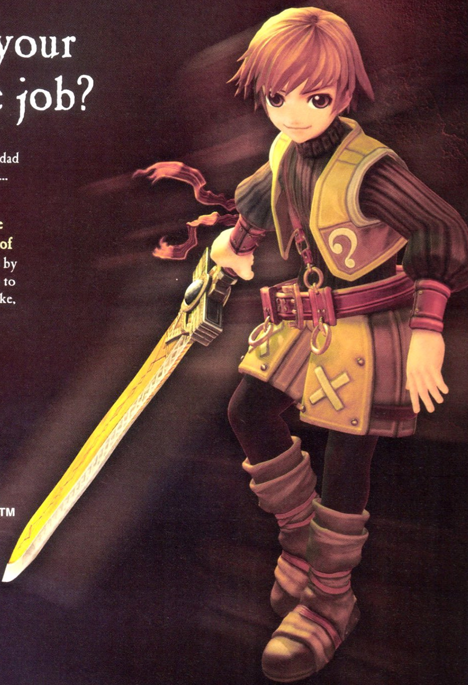

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Fantasy Violence
Language
Suggestive Themes
Use of Drugs and Alcohol

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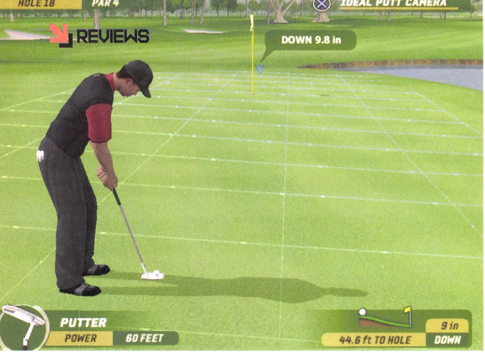
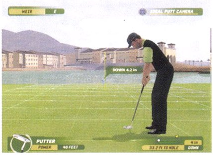
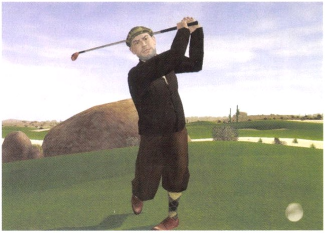






TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 06

AN EXPERIMENT GONE WRONG

As you know if you've read my reviews of previous *Tiger* games, I love that analog swing. I love the way it mirrors all the appropriate nuances of a real-life swing and that it requires you to actually *learn* how to swing the club properly. To my mind, it's the greatest addition to golf games, probably ever. Thus, it is with great sadness that I must report that analog putting—one of the raft of introductions, alterations, and refinements found in *Tiger 06*—very well may be the worst.

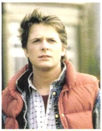
The problem: From the tee, golf is much more about physical technique than precision; but on the green, it's *all* precision. And being forced to guess wildly as to power and direction is just ridiculous. Yes, perhaps it's more realistic, but to my mind it absolutely crosses the line between fun and work—as does the new, needlessly complex character-upgrade system. This must have seemed like an awfully clever idea: an RPG-like system that awards experience based on how you play the game. Trouble is, you get experience for a skill only if you're *already* reasonably proficient in that particular area. The result is that the stats you *don't* need to improve go up quickly, while your other stats languish in mediocrity.

In fact, except for the "shot shaping" now mapped to the right analog stick (allowing you to adjust spin before a shot), just about every new feature—from the shoot-the-ball-through-the-hoops skills challenge to the utterly bizarre rivals mode in which you *chase Tiger through time* (I swear to God this is really in the game)—feels like a step in the wrong direction. And while the graphics have been improved, new courses added, and load times brought down, it just isn't enough to make up for the pain of watching my favorite golf game head down a strange, unpleasant road. « *Joe Rybicki*

VERDICT While I have to give the developers credit for trying out a whole bunch of new ideas, I'd much rather play last year's version. But if you like your golf painfully realistic, maybe you'll prefer it this way.

Pub. EA Sports **Dev.** EA Sports **ESRB** E **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●◐○]



HELLO, MCFLY!
I wasn't kidding about the time travel bit. In rivals mode you follow Tiger through four time periods, each with equipment (and opponents) appropriate to that era. It's an interesting idea, but watching these new, wacky period characters act out their silly, and often unskippable, victory or defeat animations gets really old, really fast.

FIFA 06

THE BEAUTIFUL GAME, ENHANCED FURTHER STILL

Although cosmetically it looks pretty much the same as last year's game, *FIFA 06* has undergone some fairly major changes. The biggest tweaks have been made to the controls, which now come with a variety of options. Last year's integration of the "first touch" system is still fully intact (and somehow more intuitive, although that may well be because of my familiarity with it this time), and it's now joined by a revamped free-kick system, improved tackles that feel significantly more natural, and on-the-fly tactical changes that allow you to feel more like a team captain. A frustration with previous *FIFA*s was their lack of adequate support for the one-two pass. This fundamental move was previously possible only by passing into space and keeping your fingers crossed, but it's now recognized by the game's logic as something that you might actually want to do.

Just like *Madden* in recent years, there's a huge emphasis on the career mode, and the 15-year business that it simulates has you tinkering with ticket prices, sponsorships, and team morale. It's addictive stuff that can prompt greater respect for the broader aspects of the sport. Once I dug in, the actual matches started to become a distraction. Screw the game...I want to know if the fan shop is selling shirts!

As is the norm in sports games now, *FIFA 06* is packed with challenges outside of the tournament and career modes, and the reward system feeds into another welcome trend: retro appreciation. Old-school players open up when you beat "classic" squads, and there's even a lovingly re-created version of the original Genesis game, *FIFA 1994*, on the disc. My only major disappointment is that the juggling minigame from the PSP version doesn't show up here! « *John Davison*

VERDICT Play on the field or in the management office—both work surprisingly well.

Pub. EA Sports **Dev.** EA Canada **ESRB** E **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●●◐]

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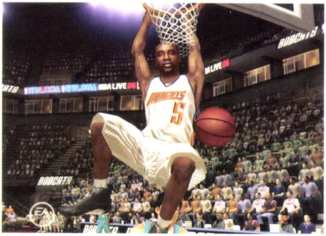

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NBA LIVE 06

APPARENTLY, MEDIOCRITY IS "IN THE GAME" AS WELL

EA seems unlikely to snag sole NBA rights anytime soon with *Live* throwing up bricks. The biggest highlight of *Live 06* is the inclusion of new "freestyle superstar" abilities for select athletes. Certain players can activate power dunks, no-look passes, or silkier jump shots than those of the average mortal.

The player models, while benefiting from a new graphics engine, don't always match up with their real-life counterparts—they look more like bobbleheads. The most glaringly inadequate player model has to be Shaq's; someone who's 7 feet 1 inch tall and built like a truck should appear more mastodonic than this only slightly beefy center.

On the positive side, EA succeeds in capturing the NBA's breakneck pace—almost too well. Players go from 0 to 60 almost instantaneously. The action often resembles an NHL game as players glide all too effortlessly across the icelike court. However, the benefit is that alley-oops come easier thanks to this greased-up flow.

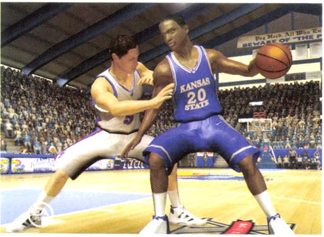
While this version is less pretty than the Xbox's, it does include *NBA Live 95* to show you that, yes, the *Live* series has made bountiful strides in 10-plus years. But one has to wonder if *Live 06*'s mostly cosmetic changes are worth $50 *this* year. « *Greg Ma*

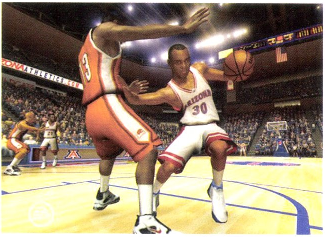
PROS Consistent hoops title plays it safe
CONS Some rough graphics; superstar feature isn't much of an update

Pub. EA Sports **Dev.** EA Sports **ESRB** E **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [○○○●●]

VOICE TALENT
The color commentary is a bright spot in *Live*, as former NBA player Steve Kerr, whose wit is as dry as his game, joins Marv Albert in the booth. Kenny Smith and Ernie Johnson also contribute.





UCLA
GON STATE

NCAA MARCH MADNESS 06

TAKE CONTROL WITH YOUR LOCKDOWN STICK!

NCAA March Madness 06 ought to be renamed *Dick Vitale 06* since the famed color commentator has such an intrusive role in the game, howling nonsensical strings of exclamations such as "Jam-slam-bam, bay-beeeee!" But don't think Vitale's the only thing that differentiates *NCAA 06* from its big brother *NBA Live 06*.

The game's best feature is the new lockdown stick. This defensive feature lets you clamp down on a ball-handler's movements and thus dictate his direction. Yes, if an opponent changes directions with a quick spin and your aggressiveness doesn't keep up, you'll be burned. But just the fact that you have unprecedented control over defense makes this innovation worthwhile.

Other *NCAA 06* features include a pretty quick AI that takes advantage of give-and-go's, pick-and-rolls, and backdoor cuts. There's a great emphasis on team ball, and the computer will quickly embarrass you if you leave someone open. With all the updates in *06*'s favor, it's hard to find fault with the games. I just wish college athletes would get paid in order to square away licensing issues so their names could be used. Then I wouldn't have to hear "Number 15 lobs to number 32, exploding with the dipsy-doo dunk-a-roo, bay-beeeee!" « *Greg Ma*

PROS Innovative defensive measures set a new standard
CONS Dick Vitale and his mouth

Pub. EA Sports **Dev.** EA Sports **ESRB** E **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [○○○○●]

LOCK IT DOWN
The lockdown stick isn't the only defensive asset in *March Madness*; you also get time-out segments in which you can switch to different defensive sets (2-3, 3-2, full-court press, and so on).

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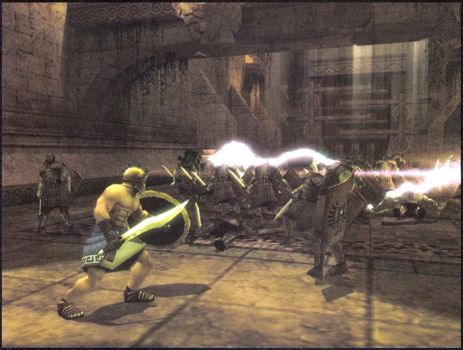
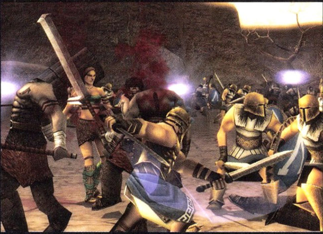
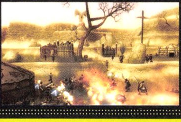
SPARTAN: TOTAL WARRIOR

TOO MUCH WORK STILL MAKES SPARTAN AN EXCITING BOY







"There is joy in work. There is no happiness except in the realization that we have accomplished something."

The automobile baron Henry Ford must have just finished playing *Spartan: Total Warrior* when he said that. I might have said the same thing. Sega's third-person actionfest set in ancient Greece is one of the toughest (not most difficult, just toughest) games I've played in a long time—so tough that it felt more like work—but I also felt pretty damn good when I finished it.

To be clear, this first title from Sega's recently acquired developer Creative Assembly (previously known for *Rome: Total War* for the PC) is a virtual thrill ride from start to finish. What it lacks in flair or ease, it more than makes up for in pure gameplay mechanics. Equal parts *Dynasty Warriors* (game style) and *God of War* (subject matter and hero), *Spartan*'s tight, intuitive control set, detailed and easy-to-navigate levels, and insane battles (the body count, oh, the body count!) conspire to make it a PS2 must-buy.

Spartan begins *in medias res* as the Roman Empire is bearing down on hapless Greece. In a Rambo turn, you play the character called simply "the Spartan" and almost single-handedly set out to stop the invading evil empire. There's a supernatural quality to the game as you collect god powers and fight sorcerers, armies of undead, and mythical creatures like the many-headed Hydra.

Sounds like an exciting story, but it's not. Neither the Spartan himself nor the plot that drives him comes anywhere near the far more imaginative Kratos and his tale of revenge from *GOW*. *Spartan* is a game in which the hero is merely a weapon—you don't have to like him, you just have to use him effectively.

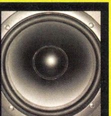
So it really comes down the gameplay, and here *Spartan* shines with high intensity from the very first level. In the first few minutes, you must take down scores of Roman invaders and destroy their siege towers. This isn't a red herring: Even in its quieter levels, *Spartan* maintains an outrageous energy. The game also builds a convincing sense of urgency with many levels timed in such as a way that victory goes to the swift. Case in point: While all the bosses are challenging, the Hydra is especially tough, and unless you have the reflexes of the Flash, you'll push that Restart button a lot. Believe me.

In the end, *Spartan* is a game of process—and getting through the levels can at times be a real chore. But as with all work done well, once you achieve your goals, there comes a satisfied, if exhausted, sense of accomplishment. *Spartan: Total Warrior* is a polished piece of work, but it's not for the timid. « *Tom Byron*

VERDICT Tough but ultimately superb gameplay. Only a lackluster hero and story are the game's Achilles' heel.

Pub. Sega **Dev.** Creative Assembly **ESRB** T **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●●○]



Spartan's sound design is especially noteworthy: You'll feel every hit not because of the force feedback, but because the sound is positively wince inducing. Great sound design is an underappreciated art, and yet the best games, such as *Soul Calibur* and the recent *Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction*, make sound an effective part of the game.

GENJI: DAWN OF THE SAMURAI

THE PERFECT WEEKEND RENTAL

As you might have guessed from its title, *Genji* puts you in the role of a samurai who's on a quest to defeat the corrupt clan that rules ancient Japan and restore honor to his exiled family. Unfortunately, the evil Heishi clan seems to have a surplus of magical baubles, known as Amahagane, which grant the sort of unspeakable power we've all come to expect from any good supernatural MacGuffin.

Collecting these gems yourself gives you great power: They slow down time, letting you execute devastating chains of timing-based counterattacks on the waves upon waves of enemy warriors. *Genji* is actually pretty easy once you've learned the timing for this technique, though that's not to say it's a bad game. On the contrary, something cool or exciting is always happening: Your characters (you'll swap between two warriors throughout the story) constantly gain experience, grow stronger, and find new weapons and armor. There's never a dull moment.

There aren't many moments in general, though. *Genji*'s big downfall is its length: You'll run through the game in less than seven hours, and aside from the hard mode that unlocks when you finish, there's not much replay incentive. But if you've got a lazy Saturday afternoon to kill, *Genji* is definitely worth a rental. « *Ryan Scott*

PROS Good story, great voice acting, and plenty of fun, fast-paced action
CONS Short, linear, and easy

Pub. Sony CEA **Dev.** Game Republic **ESRB** RP **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●●●○]

DEVIL KINGS

WHAT THE DEVIL?

Any game that features talent like *Resident Evil 4* producer Hiroyuki Kobayashi and *Devil May Cry* character designer Makoto Tsuchibayashi behind it *should* theoretically have a lot to like, but as *Devil Kings* proves, that's not always the case.

To put it bluntly, *Devil Kings* is a blatant rip-off of *Dynasty Warriors*. After taking your pick of six generals who represent various factions within the game's war-torn setting, you get to slog through waves upon waves *upon waves* of enemy soldiers, stopping briefly to collect loot, fight lame boss characters, and level up...then you make your way to the next territory on the world conquest map, where the process begins all over again, ad nauseam.

Each of the initial characters available to you possesses a unique fighting style—such as the titular Devil King's sword-and-shotgun approach and Lady Butterfly's dual pistols—but this still doesn't make up for *Devil Kings*' tepid hack-n-slash model, which is punctuated by a frustrating camera and some of the worst voice acting in recent memory. To its credit, at least the game is mercifully short.

Ultimately, one wonders why Capcom bothered to mimic the aging *Dynasty Warriors* approach. Button mashers are a trite and worn concept—and *Devil Kings*' mailed-in gameplay is a classic example of what developers should avoid at all costs in the future. « *Ryan Scott*

VERDICT An insipid waste of time.

Pub. Capcom **Dev.** Capcom **ESRB** T **MSRP** $49.99

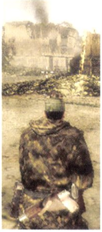
RATING [●◐○○○]

SNIPER ELITE

YOU CAN'T SEE ME

The first thing you need to know about *Sniper Elite* is that it's not solely about peering through a scope and popping holes into unsuspecting Russians. Yes, that takes up a good portion of the gameplay, but more of it is spent in a third-person mode with standard military-issue weapons as you carefully sneak through enemy lines and try to find the best possible sniping point.

Sniper Elite is mostly about finding the strategies that will get you through a gauntlet of enemies unharmed. Need to get down a narrow side street that's blocked by a tank? How about throwing some TNT next to it and then sniping the detonator from a distance?



Only then will you get to snipe, and it's quite fun. The interface is smooth and intuitive, and you can use all sorts of real-life skills: Hold your breath to steady your aim, or mask the sound of your shots by firing during loud noises (like passing aircraft). When you score a direct hit, the camera will do a slow-mo zoom and pan around the bullet's flight for a dramatic effect.

During all this, you'll often be switching over to the tiny, scribbled map that your agent has ferreted away. Your different objective points are laid out and numbered on it, along with reminder notes so that you know what to do when you get there.

Oddly, *Sniper Elite* lets you save your progress anywhere you want. So even though your saves are limited in number, this cuts into a lot of the excitement. Skimping on the stealth and using the tried-and-true tactic of "run like hell and see what happens" can get you through a lot of dangers unscathed. No risk, no thrill—but still good fun. « *Chris Kohler*

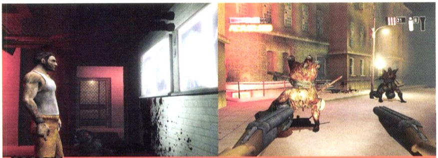
VERDICT *Sniper Elite* wins points for originality, and the gameplay works well, but it lacks a compelling narrative (the disjointed mission objectives don't cut it), and it rarely made me feel as tense as I thought it should.

Pub. Namco **Dev.** Rebellion **ESRB** M **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●◐○]

SNIPER PROOF

Snipers always getting the drop on you? Not with LifeGuard, a prototype system under development for the U.S. military (http://www.llnl.gov/remoteTEST/01new.html). If fired upon, it detects where the bullet came from, takes a snapshot of the sniper's position, and can even return fire.



THE SUFFERING: TIES THAT BIND

NEW PACKAGE, SAME GREAT TASTE

It has to be said that *Ties That Bind* simply offers more of the same stuff we got from *The Suffering*. That can be good or bad depending on how you feel about the previous game. But it should also be said that what *Ties* lacks in originality and depth, it makes up for with good old-fashioned demon slaying and a spooky atmosphere.

The Suffering's beauty is that while it's never a particularly grueling exercise of the gray matter—the few puzzles that do exist in this world are of the "pull this switch to open that door" variety—the various beasties all look and act differently, meaning almost every encounter stays relatively fresh despite the game's fundamentally repetitive nature. The game constantly changes up the mix during each encounter to keep you on your toes.

All of this is wrapped in a horror-film atmosphere that really gets the job done. The constant flashbacks Torque suffers tend to happen too frequently, but the genuinely frightening scares and disturbing imagery mostly make up for it.

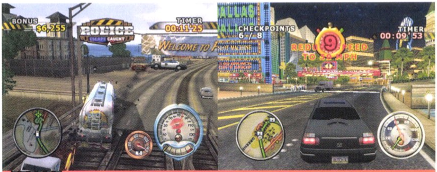
This definitely isn't the greatest action game ever made. You may cringe at its '80s-metal-album-cover demons and style-over-substance presentation. But if you take it for what it is—a mindless shooter that offers up intense action and a few good scares—*Ties* delivers. « Greg Sewart

VERDICT Offers up more of the same mindless action of the first game, which can be good or bad depending on your preference.

Pub. Midway **Dev.** Surreal Software **ESRB** M **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●◐○]

Michael Clarke Duncan (*Sin City, Daredevil*) voices Blackmore in *Ties That Bind*. Blackmore is Torque's nemesis and may actually be the man who killed Torque's family.



BIG MUTHA TRUCKERS 2: TRUCK ME HARDER

KEEP ON TRUCKIN'

I don't usually tell people this, but I'm a redneck. I've lost my Texas drawl over the years, but I used to chase greased pigs at the rodeo. I have an Uncle Bubba. For real.

So the subject matter of *Big Mutha Truckers 2* treads on sacred ground. The game brings together several staples of countrified culture: morbid obesity, gas-guzzling transportation, UFO abduction, cleavage, bestiality, homophobia, sexism, racism, alcoholism, and the fact that people who use words that end in "-ism" are totally stupid. Yes, *Truckers* wants to be the Blue Collar Comedy Tour of videogames.

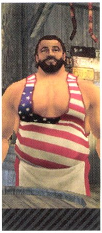
Truckers is, essentially, a world of short interstates connecting several tiny towns and minicities. Your goal is to amass a pile of money by hauling goods from town to town. If that sounds simple, it is. Though the game's map is a single, *Grand Theft Auto*–style area, you can't go off the roadways (and specified shortcuts), and you're always on an arcade-style timer.

In fact, you might say *Truckers* is an episodic version of Sega's *Crazy Taxi*, though not nearly as fast paced. The big trucks are a good excuse for floaty controls, but they handle better than what you might expect from a budget title. Speaking of which, for $20, you could do a lot worse. If you can get past the frat-boy-tastic gay jokes, the game has a lot more character than most full-priced racers. « Robert Ashley

VERDICT A nice break from a day spent watching wood-chopping sports on ESPN2.

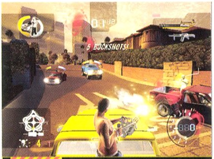
Pub. THQ **Dev.** Eutechnyx **ESRB** M **MSRP** $19.99

RATING [●●●○○]



GET LOADED

Common items hauled in *Big Mutha Truckers 2*: extra-young veal, bull milk, endangered furs, horse tranquilizers, stiff wood, fancy pants, art movies, scented pesticides.



187: RIDE OR DIE

RIDE OR DIE? WE'LL TAKE THE THIRD CHOICE

If videogames were movie trailers, *187* would be the one that would illicit groans from anyone over the age of 25. It'd be the one with half-naked girls, fast cars, a forgettable story line, and so on. And it's the one which any newspaper worth its salt would do an exposé on and reveal that its ghetto-focused world was created in Paris.

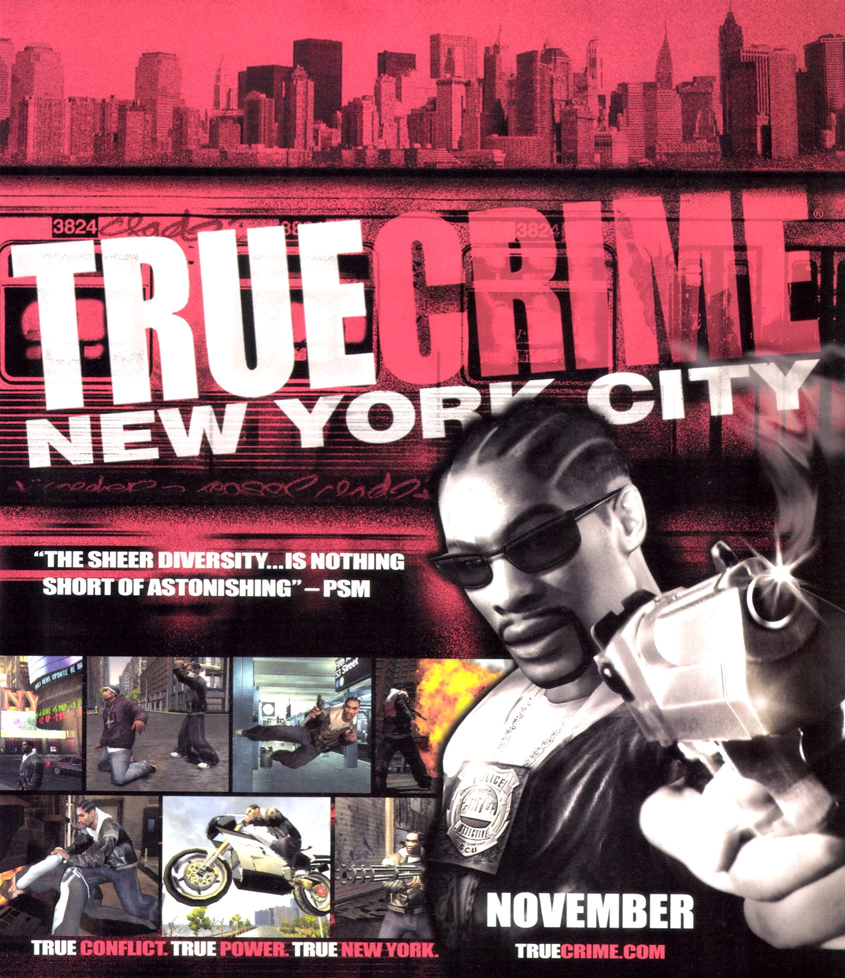
But it's also a game that can be fun for short periods of time if you go into it with the right attitude. The base gameplay is essentially a combination of *Mario Kart* and *Twisted Metal*—i.e., driving on linear tracks (for the most part) and taking out enemies using your gunner in the passenger seat. And apart from *187*'s artificial trappings, there's no single part of the game that's terrible. The driving mechanics work well, there are some fun and memorable moments, and the multiplayer options add a good amount of variety.

Unfortunately, there's no standout element that takes the game from "fun for a few minutes" to "actually good." Most of the individual qualities are competent but unspectacular (such as the "360 controls," which allow you to use the right analog stick to fire in any direction, but you can't see where you're firing half the time), and the whole package doesn't meld together in any special way. Play for an hour and a half and you'll see the majority of what the game has to offer—just like a big-budget, no-story movie. « Matt Leone

VERDICT Generic racing game wrapped inside a cheesy candy shell. With guns.

Pub. Ubisoft **Dev.** Ubisoft **ESRB** M **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●◐○○]



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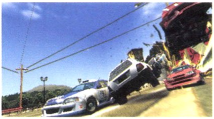


BURNOUT LEGENDS

PORTABLE MAYHEM

If you had told me a year ago that the insane feel of *Burnout 3* could be translated with little compromise to a handheld system, I would have suspected that you were on crack, smack, meth, or, indeed, dope. I would have been a fool. *Burnout Legends* captures the ridiculous speeds and lightning-fast action of the series so well that I don't really feel as though I need to bust out my copy of *Burnout 3* anymore. That's a big deal for me.

Now, I know what you're thinking: "Oh dear sweet Lord, not another PSP racing game!" And I'm with you; while *Wipeout Pure* and *Ridge Racer* rocked the house fairly soundly, it's hard to believe the PSP needs another racer. Well, after *Legends*, I don't think it does. This game has things pretty well sewn up.

Now, it's clear that a few concessions were made for the transfer to the portable format. The speed, for example, is not *quite* as blazing as it is in *Legends*' PS2 brethren. And the graphics, obviously, are simplified a bit. But the game still boasts an amazing sensation of speed, and more important, the controls are every bit as crisp as you'd hope for—even with the D-pad. You can still drift with ease, dodge obstacles swiftly, and remove yourself from the path of oncoming vehicles with a split-second's notice.

You *will* find yourself crashing more than you might expect, though. This is, to my mind, simply symptomatic of the fact that at those speeds, on such a small screen, it's sometimes hard to see oncoming vehicles until they're just way too close. The game seems to compensate for this by giving you a little more leeway in terms of what causes a crash and what causes a narrow escape, but you can't really give much leeway to a head-on, direct hit. This becomes more of a problem as you move up the ranks; coupe class is where things started to get hairy for me. But by that time, you're already hooked, and besides, if you find yourself hitting a wall (so to speak) in the races, you can just jump over to the 100 crash events to keep yourself busy.

Aside from occasional graphical and sound glitches and the return of the unbelievably poor camera in crash mode, my only real complaint is the return of pursuit races. It's nice to have an additional race mode for the PSP version, but this just did not do it for me. Rather than the fast, take-'em-down action of road rage events, pursuit becomes a plodding, *Driver*-like war of attrition: Chase, nudge, repeat until your target's health is worn away.

Other than that fairly minor complaint, it's a fantastic package, and to my mind it's easily the best racer on the system—another must-have PSP game, at last. « *Joe Rybicki*

PROS Excellent controls, great sense of speed, loads of events
CONS Pursuit event is a chore, small screen becomes a liability at higher levels

Pub. EA Games **Dev.** Criterion **ESRB** E10+ **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●●◐]

FRIENDSHIP IS SHARING

Got a friend with a PSP and a hankering for some race action? Through the magic of your PSP's game share function, you can beam over a demo course or even host a multiplayer game with a UMD-less buddy. Chances are pretty damn good they'll get hooked.

MARVEL NEMESIS: RISE OF THE IMPERFECTS

SUPERPOWERED SIMPLICITY

It's beyond cliché to point out that the PSP doesn't have many good games at the moment—this observation is actually banned from *OPM* sister magazine *EGM*'s review section, thanks to its obviousness. The thing is, though, the situation is really relevant to mention when it comes to a game like *Marvel Nemesis*. It skirts the edge of interesting, and depending on your personal circumstances, you might want to pick it up just due to the dearth of other options.

Thinking of going it alone? Then don't buy it. The lackluster but intermittently entertaining brawler mode from the PS2 version is completely stripped out of the PSP game, leaving you forced to confront a nigh-endless series of 1-on-1 fights. Worse—and this situation applies whether you plan to go multiplayer or not—you have to beat up dozens of heroes to unlock the rest of the combatants. Snore.

But if you're willing to put up with that, *Marvel Nemesis* will make a passable fighter to bash away some idle time with, provided you can find some competition. The controls are very responsive. The zoomed-in perspective (compared to its console big brother's far-flung camera) actually makes it easier to see what the fighters are doing, and thus react in kind, leading to more opportunities for strategy, even if it makes it much easier to lose track of your foe.

There is one big plus to putting *Marvel Nemesis* on the PSP. A portable is a much better platform for playing a few quick and dirty rounds—while waiting in line, mayhap. Meanwhile, the simple controls—which make the PS2 game a bit boring in long stretches—mean the PSP edition is accessible and easy to play, even with the minor distractions of gaming in the real world. *Nemesis* is also a brighter, more attractive game on the PSP. Really.

Make no mistake: With the whole of the Marvel universe laid at its feet, EA squandered a wonderful opportunity to make a truly captivating fighter. What we've got instead is a simple fighter with a lot of cool characters. Funny how it works just a little bit better on the PSP, huh? « *Christian Nutt*

VERDICT The game's still shallow, but on the PSP, ease of play becomes a virtue. It's still not fantastic, but it's a passable novelty with a great license.

Pub. EA Games **Dev.** EA Canada **ESRB** T **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●◐○○]

BIG GUY
0:40
TIME
SLEDGE

RAGDOLL
GENDER: FEMALE
FIGHT STYLE: TAE KWON DO
STANCE: LEFT

RAGDOLL
THE WAY

THE CON

KHAAAN!

Back in the days of yore (aka 1991), I remember playing *Street Fighter II* against some dude and totally trampling all over him in round one. Victory was very short-lived, as he turned around and smoked me for the win. I then realized he made himself look bad on purpose, just to fake me out. That concept is pretty much the heart of *The Con*—and is its only really interesting point.

At first, *The Con* resembles some weird sort of fusion of *Punch-Out!!* and *Def Jam Vendetta*. It features street fellows versed in the arts of wrestling, jeet kune do, street boxing, and tae kwon do. Instead of a traditional 3D or side-scrolling view of the fight, you see it from over the shoulder. The controls feel a bit like *Tekken*'s—each button is mapped to a specific limb. So far, this all sounds pretty standard.

Then there's the gambling system, which allows you to place money on each fight. You can use the L trigger to then purposely take hits or throw weak attacks. Hence, you manipulate the fight by either making yourself look like you're going to lose (which stacks the odds against you) and then suddenly win, or you can bet on the other guy, look like you're about to decimate him, and then throw the fight. Meanwhile, you have to factor in your believability, which is measured by a handy meter at the top of the screen. There's a whole "respect" system that prevents you from repeatedly throwing fights to get money (used to buy items). Also, between fights, you manage your fighters (deciding whether they rest, go to the hospital, or train to increase stats).

It sounds good so far, but that's about the best part. Everything else is pretty mediocre. The fighting system isn't particularly deep (throws and specials tend to win fights), and the graphics are the antithesis of PSP quality. The levels are bland, and not only do the characters look utterly forgettable, but their actual graphic quality is quite atrocious to the point of making women look like men. Factor in some lengthy load times (as in several small loads between team management and betting, and a big 30-second load between betting and actual fighting), and you end up with an interesting mechanic marred by a little thing called "the rest of the game." « *Thierry Nguyen*

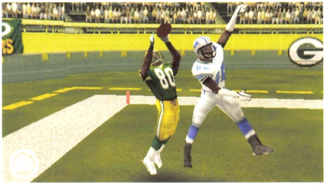
THE PAYOFF Interesting gambling mechanics
THE CON Everything else is pretty mediocre (especially graphics and load times)

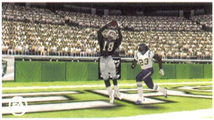
Pub. Sony CEA **Dev.** Think & Feel **ESRB** RP **MSRP** $39.99

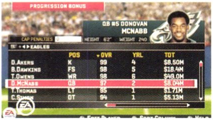
RATING [●●◐○○]

MADDEN NFL 06

IMPACT ROOKIE







PROGRESSION BONUS

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C.S[illegible]	DT	94	1	$5.13M

If compared against its console brethren, *Madden NFL 06* on PSP doesn't stand much of a chance at stacking up too favorably, nor should one expect it to. While the PS2 version is on its fifth iteration and the developers know exactly what they can get out of the system, this is the first entry for the PSP, and it definitely goes through its share of hazing.

That's not to say it's a bad game, though. Far from it. On the field, the action plays out in typically solid *Madden* fashion. After the ball is snapped, the action is extremely quick and responsive, with receivers darting between defenders and ball carriers juking and spinning with ease. And for the most part, the familiar controls are well reproduced here—you can call audibles and hot routes presnap, and even some of big-brother *06*'s new controls made it in, such as smart routes, which let you send your player to the first-down marker before finishing his route, and precision passing, which lets you dictate where the ball will go in relation to your receiver as you're passing. One feature that didn't make the cut is the clunky QB vision control cone, though I'm sure there won't be many gamers lamenting the omission. Also, because of the PSP's fewer buttons, you won't be able to pump fake or throw the ball away.

Outside of the gameplay, though, a lot of little problems give the game an unpolished feel. The biggest culprit is the mysterious load times. The minute or so of loading before a game is expected, but not the loading times at the completion of every play, which are all the more pronounced whenever text pops up (such as fourth down, interception, or time-out messages). Also, the kicking meter proves problematic. If you put any sort of power behind your kick, the meter jerks back so violently and in such a blurred state that it's too difficult to get any consistency with the accuracy—which makes it far too easy to miss extra points or kick the ball out of bounds. A bigger, easier-to-see meter would help alleviate this problem. And what's the deal with no replays or challenges? It's as if Madden got the boot in favor of Vince Lombardi, complete with the lack of technology that would come with the swap.

As for modes, you get the typical franchise deal and some minicamp drills, including a number of PSP exclusives, some of which are pretty entertaining. It's also got some decent multiplayer options, including both online and wireless play.

As a whole, *Madden 06* is a solid package. Yes, it has plenty of rough edges that leave lots of room for improvement, and yes, less-jaggy character models would be appreciated. But the core gameplay is definitely up to *Madden* standards, and for many gamers, that's all that's needed. « *Greg Ford*

PROS On-the-field play is generally smooth; fun minigames

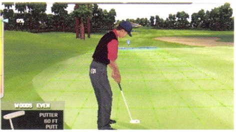
CONS Frequent load times; could use polish throughout

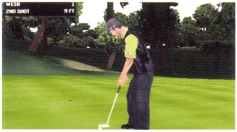
Pub. EA Sports **Dev.** EA Tiburon **ESRB** E **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●◐○]

CONNECTIVITY

Apologies to Nintendo, but *Madden 06* utilizes a nice form of connectivity between your PS2 and PSP. If you have a copy of the game for each system, you can spawn a week of the big-brother system's franchise season and send the file to your PSP via USB cable, play the game on the go, then send back the results. Be warned: Initially figuring out this swapping process is tricky, and neither manual helps. But once you do, it's a useful feature, especially for those gridiron-loving commuters.





TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 06

AN EXPERIMENT GONE RIGHT

Take a moment to flip back and read my review of the PS2 version of *Tiger 06*; it will help you better appreciate what I'm going to say here. All done? OK, check this out: *Tiger 06* PSP also includes that annoying, frustrating, excruciating analog putting—but it's handled so differently and the rest of the game is so much more sensible that the PSP version is a noticeably finer product.

The improvements to the analog putting system are twofold: First, this version sports a power meter on the left side of the screen so that—shock!—you can *actually see* how hard you're hitting the ball. And second, the "ideal putt cam," which indicates where you should aim your putts, changes depending on where you're aiming. This lets you pinpoint your trajectory and allows you to—shock!—*actually learn* how to putt better.

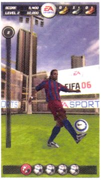
The result is that when you flub your putts (and yes, you will still flub plenty of putts), you're more likely to feel perfectly normal and traditional golf anguish, rather than feeling like the game hates you, wants you to be unhappy, and is plotting your untimely death in the middle of the night.

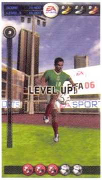
While this version also includes something called rivals mode, it's a much more straightforward climb-the-ladder affair, without the too-cute distractions of the PS2 version or its ridiculously complex experience system. And a stupendous overhaul of the loading system results in load times that are shockingly shorter than last year's version. If I bought just one golf game this year, this would be it, hands down. « *Joe Rybicki*

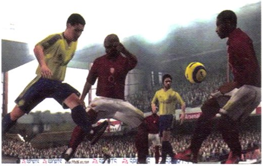
YOU'LL LOVE the zippy load times, wide variety of game types, and no-nonsense career mode
YOU'LL HATE the analog putting, but you'll learn how to do it well...unlike in the PS2 version

Pub. EA Sports **Dev.** EA Sports **ESRB** E **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●●○]







FIFA 06

THE ONE THEY SHOULD HAVE RELEASED SIX MONTHS AGO

Not satisfied with annual updates, Electronic Arts brings us a new *FIFA* for PSP just half a year after the last one. Soccer fans may delight in all the appropriately implemented sporty updates, but is it really worth your time?

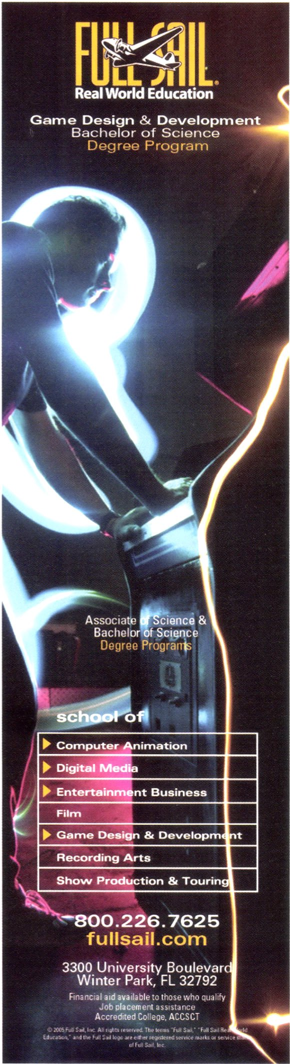
In a word, yes. The original was arguably the best sports game on PSP, but it's been updated with all the features we were craving for originally. Online play is fully supported now, as are downloadable team updates. The whole thing appears to have been very subtly overhauled, and while I'm sure EA could rattle off a list of improvements a mile long, the bottom line is that it just *feels* like more of a complete game now. It still suffers from the age-old *FIFA* problem of making you feel as much an observer as an active participant, but the presentation is slick, and there's an awful lot of gameplay to enjoy here. Outside of the expected fare, there are a huge number of challenges to work through (beat team X by Y number of points, that kind of thing), and victories here earn you points, which can be spent on unlocking bonus items and songs.

The game's secret weapon this year, though, is the ball-juggling minigame. Flip the PSP on its side, pick your favorite player (if you've ever heard of him, he's probably in here somewhere), and tap the D-pad *Dance Dance Revolution* style to keep the ball in the air. It's incredibly simple but absolutely perfect for a handheld game that revels in soccer culture. I killed more hours trying to keep David Beckham's balls off the ground than I can reasonably justify. « *John Davison*

VERDICT It's the *FIFA* we were all hoping for.

Pub. EA Sports **Dev.** EA Canada **ESRB** E **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●●◐]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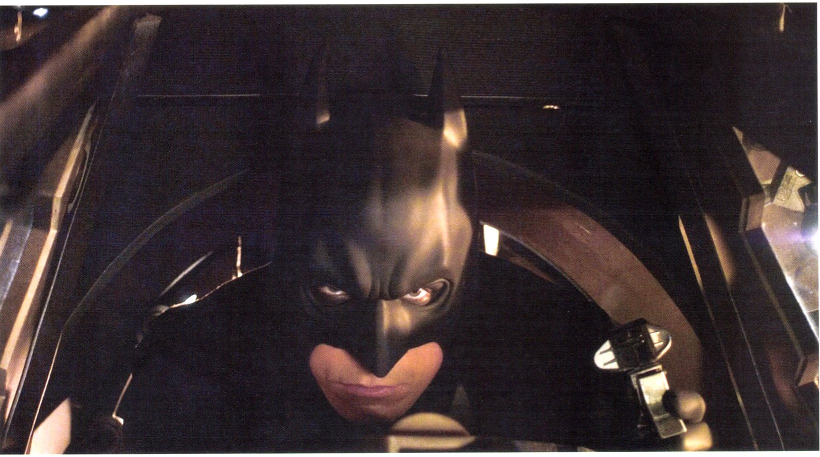


BATMAN BEGINS

(Christian Bale, Katie Holmes)

THE MAN BEHIND THE MASK by John Scalzi

Not unlike *Star Trek* films, *Batman* films seem to click every other flick. Tim Burton's *Batman*: a gothy, freaky triumph. His *Batman Returns*: hopelessly sour and dour. Exit Burton, enter Joel Schumacher. *Batman Forever*: glammy and dreamy. But then comes the benippled *Batman & Robin*, which felt like 4 a.m. in a disco forever trapped in 1975. Exit Schumacher, and Batman himself, for eight years. Then enter Chris Nolan and *Batman Begins*. Bam, baby.

Nolan hits all the right notes, and he hits them hard. His Batman is neither Burton's goth or Schumacher's glam, but is something else entirely, something harder, and—to the extent it is possible in the *Batman* universe at all—something more realistic. It's a Batman who has to work to get where he is, both in training and in equipment, as the first part of the film shows, when Bruce Wayne (Christian Bale, properly intense) learns the secrets of combat from a mysterious teacher (Liam Neeson) and, upon his return to Gotham, assembles his bat accessories with the help of a useful but ignored scientist (Morgan Freeman) languishing in some subbasement of Wayne Industries. Then it's out to do battle with the forces of Gotham's underworld, which isn't always smooth sailing. This Batman has to learn to be Batman.

Does everything work? No, not quite. There are a few too many villains running around the premises this time out, for example; it wouldn't hurt to pare down to just one or two (Burton knew that much, at least). And as the love interest, Katie Holmes isn't exactly up to Kim Basinger or Nicole Kidman stature. But these weaknesses don't really detract from the surprisingly believable world Nolan's created for Batman to move around in this time. Well done, sir. Well done. Now, try not screw up the next film. History is against you, but maybe you'll be the one to break the streak.

RATING

THE AMITYVILLE HORROR

(Ryan Reynolds, Melissa George)

The good news is that the house is roomy. The bad news is that the walls drip human blood. But that's why it was listed as a fixer-upper! "Fixer-upper" is also a reasonable description of this dippy film, a remake of the 1979 film of the same name, in which a family gets a steal on a house, only to find it demon-haunted. Lots of bad stuff happens, but alas, most of that occurs not because of the script but because Ryan Reynolds is attempting to act. Get out, indeed.

RATING [○○●●●]

LAND OF THE DEAD

(Simon Baker, John Leguizamo)

Would the zombie flick exist were it not for George Romero? The answer is simple: No. Without Romero setting the grisly tone for the genre, beginning with *Night of the Living Dead*, the zombie cinematic vocabulary wouldn't be the same. No Romero, no zombies. No fun.

So what a thrill that Romero's back in the zombie biz, and with *Land of the Dead*, he adds a little bit to the formula: evolution. The zombies of this near-future run-down world aren't just the shuffling horde of the old days: Not only do they eat brains, but they also use them. To, you know, figure out stuff. And that's bad news for the humans. Very bad news indeed. Romero's joy in doing horrible things with and to zombies continues unabated—don't watch after a big meal. Other than that, repeat after me: Brrraaaaaaaaains!

RATING [○○○○●]

BEWITCHED

(Nicole Kidman, Will Ferrell)

The problem with making a movie from a TV series whose reruns appeal mainly to 60-year-old hausfraus is that there's not enough of them to fill a multiplex, as the makers of *Bewitched* discovered when it fell on its adorably twitching nose. The fact that it's about a producer remaking the old TV series as a movie and accidentally hiring a real witch to play a fake one just means there's another layer of winking subtext no one cares about.

RATING [○○◐●●]

THE INTERPRETER

(Sean Penn, Nicole Kidman)

This is one of those intelligent, meant-for-adults movies that everyone keeps saying Hollywood should make, ignoring the fact that such movies also turn out crushingly dull most of the time—and does this one fit the bill: Kidman's a UN interpreter who overhears an assassination plot; Penn's the Secret Service dude who has to protect her. I like grown-up movies plenty, and this film is decent enough but, eh. What it really needs is more cowbell.

RATING [○○○●●]

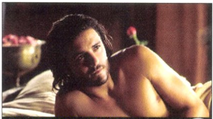
DVD RELEASES

October 4
- The Amityville Horror
- The Interpreter

October 11
- Kicking & Screaming
- Kingdom of Heaven
- Unleashed

October 18
- Batman Begins
- Land of the Dead

October 25
- Bewitched
- Herbie: Fully Loaded
- House of Wax
- Kids in the Hall: Complete Season 3

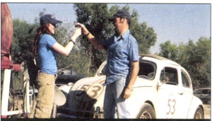


KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

(Orlando Bloom, Liam Neeson)

Orlando Bloom is not ready to be the star of a major historical epic, but don't hold that against *Kingdom of Heaven*. It's arguably the best movie about the Crusades ever made, in part because it takes relatively few liberties with history, and also because director Ridley Scott knows epic battles. It looks great, it isn't stupid, and if Bloom isn't really the guy here he needs to be, at least he goes down swinging. You could do worse for a historical epic.

RATING [○○○○●]

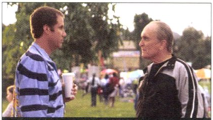


HERBIE: FULLY LOADED

(Lindsay Lohan, Matt Dillon)

My problem with *Fully Loaded* is that I couldn't watch the film without wondering if Disney really did digitally downsize Lindsay Lohan's chest so as not to excite the eighth-grade boys in the audience. First: Like any eighth-grade boy would be caught dead at this film. Second: Now you know where my attention was. The rest of the movie is something of a blur, which I expect is not a bad thing. Damn you, Disney, and your special-effects rumors!

RATING [○○◐●●]



KICKING & SCREAMING

(Will Ferrell, Robert Duvall)

Will Ferrell plays a weenie of a dad who becomes a tyrant of a coach for his kid's soccer team, mostly to get back at his own dad (Duvall), who was clearly not the huggy type. Since as a parent I dread the day I have to come face-to-face with a ball-busting coach, watching this doesn't do much for me, even with Ferrell and Duvall doing reasonable jobs. Mike Ditka's in this flick, too, and since I suffered through the Ditka era in Chicago, let me say: Hell no.

RATING [○○◐●●]

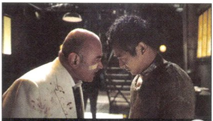
UMD RELEASES

October 4
- Blade
- The Butterfly Effect
- Freddy vs. Jason
- Texas Chainsaw Massacre

October 11
- Kingdom of Heaven

October 18
- Rambo: First Blood
- Universal Soldier

October 25
- Batman (1966)



UNLEASHED

(Jet Li, Bob Hoskins)

This movie boils down to six words: Jet Li as human pit bull. Watching Li explode and kick ass is one of modern cinema's finer pleasures. But the rest of *Unleashed* doesn't suck either: Li plays a quiet but deadly man trained by a gangster (Hoskins) to wreak havoc, and does so until he meets Sam (Morgan Freeman), who offers an alternative to that life. So there's an actual film between glorious scenes of Li doing serious damage.

RATING [○○○○●]

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SOULCALIBUR3.1UP.COM

For more hands-on impressions of the sequel to the best fighting game ever, stop on by. As a bonus, watch to see how your favorite *OPM* staffers did in the Second Annual Ziff Davis *Soul Calibur II* Tournament.

CONSOLEWAR.1UP.COM

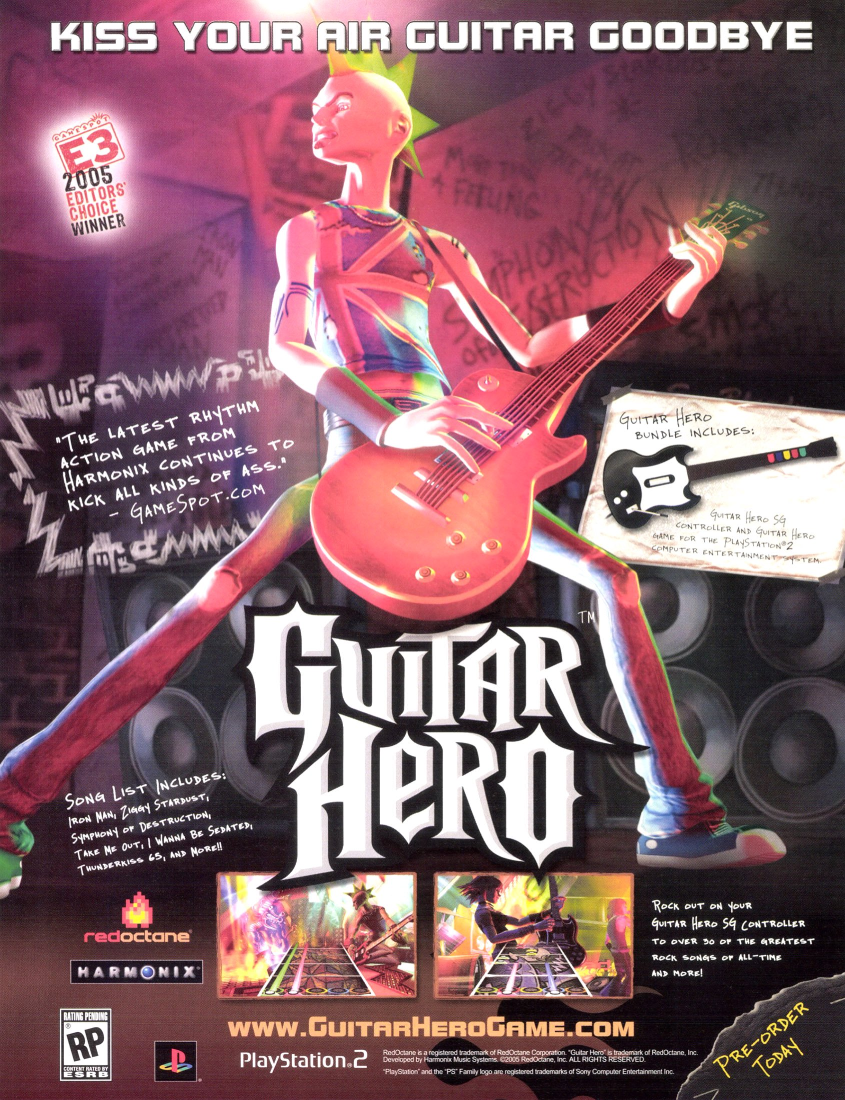
Between the time when we send this issue to print and when you'll hold it in your hands, a playable PS3 will be presented publicly for the first time ever at this year's Tokyo Game Show (the Japanese equivalent of E3). Want up-to-the-minute details on what it's like and whether that silly banana controller is still around? This is your place.

GIANCARLOV.1UP.COM

What do *OPM* editors think about in their precious spare time? Well, Transformers for one. Internet ads for another. In other words, our blood is geeky through and through. Check and see what else has been preoccupying Giancarlo's mind as of late.

PS2.1UP.COM

So many games, so little cash! If you're still undecided about what to spend your money on after reading this month's crop of glowing reviews, then you might want a second opinion—you can find those (and even third and fourth opinions) from our coworkers, the editors of 1UP and *EGM*.



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ELEVEN ESSENTIAL FIGHTING GAMES

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ELEVEN ESSENTIAL FIGHTING GAMES

FIGHT FOR YOUR RIGHT TO FIGHT

The year was 1991. All over the world, tokens were being slapped on cabinets—the universal sign for "I got next." The game was Street Fighter II, and while it wasn't the first fighting game to hit the arcades, it damn sure was the biggest. Now, almost 15 years later, there are so many great fighting games available that we just couldn't stop at 10.

SOUL CALIBUR II

Pub. Capcom Dev. Capcom
Reviewed in OPM #84
OPM RATING ●●●●●

In case you can't figure it out based on this image, here it is spelled out in plain language: *Soul Calibur II* is our favorite fighting game. Yeah, there are technically a few things "wrong and unbalanced" with it (hello, Raphael and your cheap Triangle-Triangle-Triangle attack!), but ultimately, we love it because it's balanced (overall), it's elegant, and it's accessible. People who know what the hell eight-way running, the clash system, or guard impacts are will love to strategize their fighting, while people who just like to hit pretty buttons will have a fun time as well. Just buy it. Seriously. Go now. Or your soul will burn in some special *SC2*-hating heathen-space.

(PS2)

DEAD OR ALIVE 2: HARDCORE

Pub. Tecmo **Dev.** Team Ninja

Reviewed in OPM #39

OPM RATING ●●●●◐

Back before the studio went Xbox-exclusive, Team Ninja made fighting games for the PS2, culminating in 2000's excellent *DOA2: Hardcore*, a buffed-up version of the Dreamcast's *DOA2* from earlier in the year. One of the highlights of the plethora of modes the game sports is tag team, which offers almost instantaneous tags, allowing for some awesome combinations. Take tons of gameplay, add great graphics and silly Engrish dialogue, eliminate in-game loading screens, and you've got a great fighter. Add in the perky bosoms of Tina and Helena, and you've got a *really* great fighter.

(PS2)

DEF JAM FIGHT FOR NY

Pub. EA Games **Dev.** EA Canada/Aki

Reviewed in OPM #85

OPM RATING ●●●●◐

Like everyone else, we originally thought a fighting game featuring hip-hop stars was just a cynical attempt by EA to cash in on a trend. We were wrong, dead wrong. *Def Jam Vendetta*, a superb brawler based on the excellent fighting engine by developer Aki, knocked us out, but 2004's follow-up *Def Jam Fight for NY*, with a shiny new M rating, was all *G'ed up and on crunk* (that's gangsta for "new and improved"). In his 4.5-star review, Giancarlo called *Fight for NY* "a gamer's game through and through" and declared, "Whether you're a fan of hip-hop or not, *Def Jam Fight for NY* delivers on all fronts...." *Fight for NY* is a delivery we gladly signed for.

(PS2)

GUILTY GEAR X2

Pub. Sammy **Dev.** Arc System Works

Reviewed in OPM #66

OPM RATING ●●●●○

OK, you people who might conceivably be sick of *Street Fighter II* and yearn for an even crazier 2D fighter, go buy this disc of insanity. Learn the bizarre language of "psych bursts," "faultless defense," "burst gauge," and "false Roman cancels." On top of the intricate and unique fighting mechanics are the gorgeous graphics that show those fancy 3D games some what-for; the high-resolution 2D graphics make you think you're watching some sort of bizarre anime battle rather than playing a game. Plus, we think it's hilarious that the hot-looking nun character, Bridget, is actually a dude.

(PS2)

MORTAL KOMBAT: DECEPTION

Pub. Midway **Dev.** Midway

Reviewed in OPM #87

OPM RATING ●●●●○

The old saw "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts" never applied so well to a game as it does to *Deception*. If seen only as a fighting game, *Deception* pales in comparison to the far superior *Soul Calibur II*. But with a mess of extra games within the game—including fun takes on *Puzzle Fighter* and *Battle Chess*, as well as a simplistic RPG—the *Deception* "package" is simply brilliant. Best of all, its smooth online mode (a first for PS2 fighters) delivers the one-two punch that moved *Deception*'s needle from "good" to "great."

(PS2)

STREET FIGHTER

ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION

Pub. Capcom **Dev.** Capcom

Reviewed in OPM #84

OPM RATING ●●●●○

Remember plunking down quarters on the *Street Fighter II* machine and then getting annoyed at that cheap little jerk who'd trap you in the corner with Blanka? You can relive those memories with this all-in-one *Anniversary Collection*. Burning questions like "*Turbo* Chun Li or *Championship Edition* Chun Li?" can now be answered! On top of that, you get the near-perfect *Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike*. So you get all versions of a watershed fighting game, plus its fantastic sequel, in one package. If you find this lacking, you yourself lack fighting spirit.

(PS2)

TEKKEN 5

Pub. Namco **Dev.** Namco

Reviewed in OPM #92

OPM RATING ●●●●○

We would have included *Tekken 3* on this list if it weren't for the fact that it's included (along with its two predecessors!) in the impressive *Tekken 5* package. Forsaking the gimmicks of *Tekken 4* and *Tekken Tag Tournament*, *T5* gets back to its roots with slick, solid, hand-to-hand combat. Advanced techniques like wall attacks and counters are expanded and refined, but without sacrificing the series' trademark accessibility. Fighting purists may still find *T3*'s core gameplay to be the peak of *Tekken*-ness, but you can't go wrong with having all that and more—including some of the most awesomely dramatic endings of the franchise.

(PS2)

VIRTUA FIGHTER 4: EVOLUTION

Pub. Sega **Dev.** Sega AM2

Reviewed in OPM #72

OPM RATING ●●●●●

When Sega rereleased *Virtua Fighter 4* as a Greatest Hits title, the company actually added content to the game while knocking down the price by more than half. And this was already the game we'd called "the best fighting game ever made." That title's since been stolen by *Soul Calibur II*, but *VF4* is still one of the most demanding, complex, and rewarding fighters on the market. By creating fighters and taking them through an exhaustive training regimen, you can build their abilities, unlock new gear, and even teach them to fight *on their own*—without you touching a controller. That's hardcore fighting action.

(PS2)

WAR OF THE MONSTERS

Pub. Sony CEA **Dev.** Incog

Reviewed in OPM #64

OPM RATING ●●●●●

It's not surprising that a fighting game from the minds who brought the world *Twisted Metal: Black* involves a lot of environmental destruction and mayhem. The fact that you cause this destruction as a gigantic monster (such as fanged ape Congar or mutant mantis Preytor) makes it that much more satisfying. It's like having a crazy Japanese monster movie trapped inside your PS2, with you as the director.

(PS1)

BUSHIDO BLADE

Pub. Squaresoft **Dev.** Lightweight

Not reviewed in OPM

There has never been a more realistic fighting game than *Bushido Blade*. That's not to say the game includes decapitations and such, but it does a great job of conveying what fighting with actual edged weapons would feel like. Stab your opponent in his arm and he can't use the arm for the rest of the match; get him in the heart or the neck and it's game over—even if it's your very first hit. The possibility of one-hit kills makes the matches short and occasionally frustrating, but the wide variety of real fighting styles makes up in depth what the matches lack in length.

(PS1)

WWF SMACKDOWN! 2: KNOW YOUR ROLE

Pub. THQ **Dev.** Yuke's

Reviewed in OPM #40

OPM RATING ●●●●●

Most of the great PS1 fighters have been surpassed by PS2 sequels—most, but not all: *SmackDown! 2* still stands as the best balance of wrestling's drama and mayhem. While the soap-opera story line is now hopelessly outdated, the staggeringly robust create-a-wrestler feature offers plenty of replay value, and hey, you could always update each wrestler yourself. If you were, you know, bored. And crazy. Anyway, it's a really good game that still stands as one of the best wrestling titles ever made.

REVIEW ARCHIVE

Game names in black bars indicate a Greatest Hits title. Names in red bars indicate a score of 5 out of 5. The ⚡ symbol indicates the game supports online play.

PSP

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Ape Escape: On the Loose	Sony CEA	●●●	93
Archer Maclean's Mercury	Ignition	●●●◖	94
ATV Offroad Fury: Blazin' Trails	Sony CEA	●●●	94
Coded Arms	Konami	●●	95
Darkstalkers Chronicle: TCT	Capcom	●●●	93
Dead to Rights: Reckoning	Namco	●●◖	96
Death, Jr.	Konami	●●◖	96
Dynasty Warriors	Koei	●●●	92
FIFA Soccer	EA Sports	●●●●	94
Frantix	Platform Pub.	●●●	97
Gretzky NHL	Sony CEA	●●●◖	93
GripShift	Platform Pub.	●●●◖	97
Hot Shots Golf: Open Tee	Sony CEA	●●●●	95
Lumines	Ubisoft	●●●●	92
MediEvil Resurrection	Sony CEA	●●●●	97
Metal Gear Acid	Konami	●●●●	92
Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition	Rockstar	●●●●	96
MLB	Sony CEA	●●●◖	94
MVP Baseball	EA Sports	●●●	95
Namco Museum Battle Collection	Namco	●●●◖	97
NBA	Sony CEA	●●◖	93
NBA Street Showdown	EA Sports Big	●●●	94
Need for Speed Underground Rivals	EA Games	●●●◖	92
NFL Street 2: Unleashed	EA Sports Big	●●●	93
Rengoku: The Tower of Purgatory	Konami	●	93
Ridge Racer	Namco	●●●●◖	92
Smart Bomb	Eidos	●◖	93
Spider-Man 2	Activision	●●●◖	93
Tiger Woods PGA Tour	EA Sports	●●●●	93
Tony Hawk's Underground 2: Remix	Activision	●●●●	93
Twisted Metal: Head-On	Sony CEA	●●●●	93
Untold Legends: Brotherhood...	Sony Online	●●●	92
Wipeout Pure	Sony CEA	●●●●	93
World Tour Soccer	Sony CEA	●●●	93

PS2

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
.hack//INFECTION	Bandai	●●●◖	65
.hack//MUTATION	Bandai	●●●●	69
.hack//OUTBREAK	Bandai	●●●●	73
.hack//QUARANTINE	Bandai	●●●●	76
18 Wheeler American Pro Trucker	Acclaim	●●●●	52
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Ace Combat 5: The Unsung War	Namco	●●●●	87
Activision Anthology	Activision	●●●●	64
Aero Elite: Combat Academy	Sega	●●●	67
The Adventures of Cookie & Cream	Agetec	●●●◖	44
Aggressive Inline	Acclaim	●●●●◖	59
Airblade	Namco	●●●●	53
Airforce Delta Strike	Konami	●●●	78
Alias	Acclaim	●●◖	81
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Aliens Versus Predator: Extinction	EA Games	●●●◖	72
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All-Star Baseball 2003	Acclaim	●●●◖	56
All-Star Baseball 2004	Acclaim	●●●	67
⚡All-Star Baseball 2005	Acclaim	●●◖	80
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⚡Amplitude	Sony CEA	●●●●	68
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Ape Escape: Primed & Pumped	Ubisoft	●●◖	88
Aqua Aqua	3DO	●●	42
Arc the Lad: End of Darkness	Namco	●●	95
Arc the Lad: Twilight of the Spirits	Sony CEA	●●●●	70
Arctic Thunder	Midway	●	50
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Armored Core 2	Agetec	●●●	39
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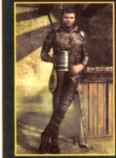
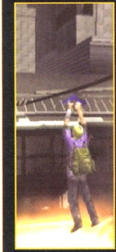
Army Men RTS	3DO	●●●●	56
Army Men: Sarge's Heroes 2	3DO	●●◖	45
Asterix & Obelix Kick Buttix	Atari	●●◖	85
Astro Boy	Sega	●●●	85
Atari Anthology	Atari	●●	89
Atelier Iris: Eternal Mana	NIS America	●●●◖	94
Athens 2004	Sony CEA	●●◖	83
ATV Offroad Fury	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●**	**42**
⚡ATV Offroad Fury 2	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●**	**64**
⚡ATV Offroad Fury 3	Sony CEA	●●●●	88
ATV Quad Power Racing 2	Acclaim	●●●●	66
⚡Auto Modellista	Capcom	●●◖	69
Backyard Baseball	Atari	●●◖	81
Backyard Wrestling: Don't Try This at Home	Eidos	●●◖	75
Backyard Wrestling 2: There Goes the Neighborhood	Eidos	●◖	89
Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance	**Interplay**	**●●●●◖**	**52**
Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II	Interplay	●●●◖	77
Barbarian	Titus	●●	57
The Bard's Tale	Vivendi Universal	●●●●◖	86
Bass Strike Virtual Fishing Tournament	THQ	●◖	51
Batman Begins	EA Games	●●●	96
Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu	Ubisoft	●●	74
Batman: Vengeance	Ubisoft	●●●	51
Battle Assault 3	Bandai	●●◖	88
Battle Engine Aquila	Atari	●●●◖	65
Battlestar Galactica	Vivendi Universal	●●●	76
Beat Down: Fists of Vengeance	Capcom	●●	97
Beyond Good & Evil	Ubisoft	●●●●	75
Big Mutha Truckers	Empire	●●●	71
Bionicle: The Game	EA Games	●●◖	75
Black & Bruised	Majesco	●●●●	67
Blade II	Activision	●●	62
Blood Omen 2	Eidos	●●●◖	57
BloodRayne	Majesco	●●●◖	63
BloodRayne 2	Majesco	●●●●◖	87
Blood Will Tell	Sega	●●●●	87
Bloody Roar 3	Activision	●●●◖	47
Bloody Roar 4	Konami	●	75
Blowout	Majesco	●●●	77
BMX XXX	Acclaim	●◖	65
Bombastic	Capcom	●●◖	72
Breath of Fire: Dragon Quarter	Capcom	●●●●	67
Britney's Dance Beat	THQ	●●●●	58
⚡Brothers in Arms: Road to Hill 30	Ubisoft	●●●	92
The Bouncer	Square EA	●●●	42
Buffy the Vampire Slayer: CB	Sierra/Fox	●●●◖	73
Bujingai: The Forsaken City	Bam	●●●●	82
Burnout	Acclaim	●●●●◖	52
Burnout 2: Point of Impact	Acclaim	●●●●	63
⚡Burnout 3: Takedown	**EA Games**	**●●●●●**	**85**
Butt-Ugly Martians: Zoom or Doom!	Crave	●●	73
Cabela's Big Game Hunter	**Activision**	**●●◖**	**67**
Cabela's Big Game Hunter 2005 Adv.	Activision	●●●	90
Cabela's Dangerous Hunts	**Activision**	**●●◖**	**76**
Cabela's Deer Hunt 2004 Season	Activision	●●◖	74
Cabela's Deer Hunt 2005 Season	Activision	●●●●◖	85
⚡Call of Duty: Finest Hour	Activision	●●●●	89
Capcom Fighting Evolution	Capcom	●◖	88
Capcom vs. SNK 2	Capcom	●●●●◖	51
Carmen Sandiego: The Secret of the Stolen Drums	Bam	●●◖	77
CART Fury	Midway	●	47
Casper: Spirit Dimensions	TDK Mediactive	●●◖	50
Castlevania: Lament of Innocence	Konami	●●●●	74
The Cat in the Hat	Vivendi Universal	●●	76
Catwoman	EA Games	●	84
⚡Champions of Norrath: Realms of EverQuest	**Sony Online**	**●●●●◖**	**78**
⚡Champions: Return to Arms	Sony Online	●●●●◖	90
Chaos Legion	Capcom	●●●◖	70
Charlie and the Chocolate Factory	2K Games	◖	97
⚡Chessmaster	Ubisoft	●●●◖	70
Choplifter: Crisis Shield	Xicat	●●●	69
ChoroQ	Atlus	●●●◖	86
City Crisis	Take-Two	●●●	48
Clock Tower 3	Capcom	●●●	68
Cold Fear	Ubisoft	●●●	92
Cold Winter	Vivendi Universal	●●●◖	93
Colin McRae Rally 3	**Codemasters**	**●●●●●**	**68**
Colosseum: Road to Freedom	Koei	●●◖	95
Combat Elite: WWII Paratroopers	Acclaim	●●●	83
Commandos 2: Men of Courage	Eidos	●●	62
Conflict: Desert Storm	**Gotham Games**	**●◖**	**63**
Conflict: Desert Storm II	Gotham Games	●●●	74
Conflict: Vietnam	Global Star	●●◖	86
Conflict Zone	Ubisoft	●●◖	63
Constantine	THQ	●●●	92
Contra: Shattered Soldier	Konami	●●●●◖	64
Corvette	Global Star	●●●◖	81
Cool Boarders 2001	Sony CEA	●●●●	46
Crash Bandicoot: Wrath of Cortex	**Universal**	**●●●◖**	**51**
⚡Crash 'N' Burn	Eidos	●●	87
Crash Nitro Kart	**Vivendi Universal**	**●●●◖**	**76**
Crash Twinsanity	Vivendi Universal	●●◖	86
Crazy Taxi	**Acclaim**	**●●●●**	**46**
Crimson Sea 2	Koei	●●●◖	80
Crimson Tears	Capcom	●●●◖	83
Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon	Ubisoft	●●	74
Culdcept	SNK	●●●◖	75
Dark Angel: Vampire Apocalypse	Metro3D	●◖	49
Dark Cloud	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●◖**	**46**
Dark Cloud 2	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**66**
Dark Summit	THQ	●●●◖	52
Darkwatch	Capcom	●●●	96
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2	**Acclaim**	**●●●◖**	**50**
DDR Extreme	Konami	●●●●	85
DDRMAX	Konami	●●●●	63
DDRMAX 2	Konami	●●●●	74
Dead or Alive 2: Hardcore	Tecmo	●●●●◖	39
Dead to Rights	**Namco**	**●●●**	**65**
Dead to Rights II	Namco	●●	94
Death by Degrees	Namco	●◖	90
Def Jam Vendetta	**EA Sports Big**	**●●●●**	**67**
Def Jam Fight for NY	EA Games	●●●●◖	85
Defender	Midway	●●●◖	62
Destroy All Humans!	THQ	●●●	95
⚡Destruction Derby Arenas	Gathering	●●◖	80
Deus Ex: The Conspiracy	Eidos	●●●●◖	56
Devil May Cry	**Capcom**	**●●●●●**	**50**
Devil May Cry 2	**Capcom**	**●●●**	**66**
Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening	Capcom	●●●●◖	91
Digimon Rumble Arena 2	Bandai	●●●	88
Digimon World 4	Bandai	●●	94
Digital Hitz Factory	XS Games	●●●●	76
Dino Stalker	Capcom	●●●◖	61
Disaster Report	Agetec	●●●◖	65
Disgaea: Hour of Darkness	Atlus	●●●●	72
Disney Golf	EA Games	●●●●	61
Disney's Extreme Skate Adventure	Activision	●●●●	73
Disney's PK: Out of the Shadows	Ubisoft	●●◖	63
Disney's Treasure Planet	Sony CEA	●●●◖	64
A Dog's Life	Hip Interactive	●●	84
Donald Duck: Goin' Quackers	Ubisoft	●●●◖	42
Downforce	Titus	●●	57
Downhill Domination	Sony CEA	●●●●	71
Dr. Muto	Midway	●●◖	63
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai	**Atari**	**●●●◖**	**65**
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 2	**Atari**	**●●◖**	**76**
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 3	Atari	●●●●	88
Dragon Ball Z: Sagas	Atari	●●◖	93
Dragon Rage	3DO	●◖	54



PORTABLE BARD

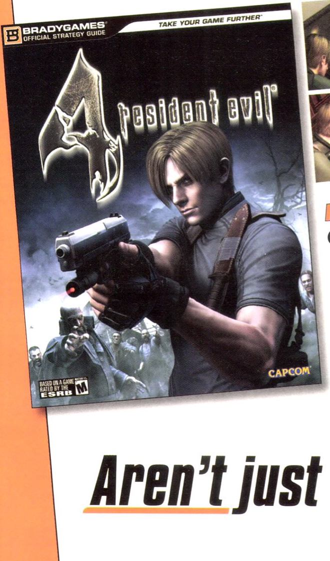
When we first saw *The Bard's Tale*, we commented to the developers that it was the type of game that would work perfectly on PSP. They gave us a knowing wink...but we've still heard no definite news about a handheld port of this hysterical RPG.



BEAUTIFUL DISASTER

Survival games tend to come primarily in the horror variety, but *Disaster Report* is one of a kind. The enemy isn't zombies or aliens, but a crumbling city in the wake of an earthquake. It's a nicely entertaining riff on the survival theme.

Sometimes your best weapons to fight evil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TAKE YOUR GAME FURTHER
4 resident evil
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BASED ON A GAME RATED BY THE ESRB
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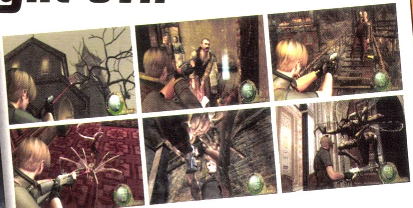

Resident Evil® 4
Official Strategy Guide

- New Platform
- New Weapons
- New Areas to Complete
- New Strategies

Aren't just found in the game

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GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Drakan: The Ancients' Gates	Sony CEA	●●●●	53
Drakengard	Square Enix USA	●●	78
DRIV3R	Atari	●●●◖	83
Driven	Bam	●	52
Driving Emotion Type-S	Square EA	●●◖	41
Drome Racers	EA Games	●●◖	64
Dropship	Bam	●●●●	57
Dual Hearts	Atlus	●●●	61
Duel Masters	Atari	●●●	89
The Dukes of Hazzard: Return of the General Lee	Ubisoft	●●●◖	87
Dynasty Tactics	Koei	●●●●◖	61
Dynasty Tactics 2	Koei	●●●●	74
Dynasty Warriors 2	Koei	●●●●	38
Dynasty Warriors 3	Koei	●●●●	52
Dynasty Warriors 3: Xtreme Legends	Koei	●●●◖	65
Dynasty Warriors 4	**Koei**	**●●●●**	**85**
Dynasty Warriors 4: Empires	Koei	●●●●◖	68
Dynasty Warriors 4: Xtreme Legends	Koei	●●●◖	75
Dynasty Warriors 5	Koei	●●●◖	92
Ecco the Dolphin: Defender of the Future	Acclaim	●●◖	56
Echo Night: Beyond	Agetec	●●●	84
Egg Mania: Eggstreme Madness	Kemco	●●◖	61
⚡eJay Clubworld	Crave	●●	73
Endgame	Empire	●●	59
Enter the Matrix	**Atari**	**●●●**	**71**
Enthusia Professional Racing	Konami	●●◖	93
Ephemeral Fantasia	Konami	●◖	49
Escape From Monkey Island	**LucasArts**	**●●●●●**	**46**
⚡ESPN College Hoops	ESPN Videogames	●●●◖	76
⚡ESPN College Hoops 2K5	ESPN Videogames	●●●◖	88
ESPN International Track & Field	Konami	●●●	39
ESPN International Winter Sports 2002	Konami	●●●●	54
⚡ESPN Major League Baseball	ESPN Videogames	●●●◖	80
ESPN MLS Extra Time	Konami	●●	44
ESPN National Hockey Night	Konami	●◖	45
ESPN NBA 2Night	Konami	●●	42
ESPN NBA 2Night 2002	Konami	●●●	56
⚡ESPN NBA 2K5	ESPN Videogames	●●●●	87
⚡ESPN NBA Basketball	**ESPN Videogames**	**●●●●●**	**75**
⚡ESPN NFL Football	ESPN Videogames	●●●●◖	72
⚡ESPN NFL 2K5	ESPN Videogames	●●●●	84
⚡ESPN NHL Hockey	ESPN Videogames	●●●●◖	73
⚡ESPN NHL 2K5	ESPN Videogames	●●●●◖	85
ESPN Winter X Games Snowboarding	Konami	●●●	41
ESPN Winter X Games Snowboarding 2002	Konami	●●●	53
ESPN X Games Skateboarding	Konami	●●●●	49
Eternal Ring	Agetec	●●	38
Eve of Extinction	Eidos	●●◖	56
Everblue 2	Capcom	●●●	66
Evergrace	Agetec	●●	39
⚡EverQuest Online Adventures	Sony Online	●●◖	66
⚡EverQuest Online Adventures: Frontiers	Sony Online	●●●◖	77
Evil Dead: A Fistful of Boomstick	THQ	●●●	70
Evil Twin	Ubisoft	●●	52
Evolution Skateboarding	Konami	●●◖	63
Evolution Snowboarding	Konami	●	65
Extermination	Sony CEA	●●◖	48
Extreme-G III	Acclaim	●●●●	50
EyeToy: AntiGrav	Sony CEA	●●●●◖	87
EyeToy: Groove	Sony CEA	●●●●◖	80
EyeToy: Play 2	Sony CEA	●●●●◖	96
F1 2001	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**52**
F1 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	60
F1 Career Challenge	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**71**
F1 Championship	Ubisoft	●●●●	43
F1 Championship Season 2000	EA Sports	●●◖	41
Fairly OddParents: Shadow Showdown	THQ	●●●◖	88
Fallout: Brotherhood of Steel	Interplay	●●◖	78
Fantastic 4	Activision	●●●◖	96
Fantavision	Sony CEA	●●●●	40
Fatal Frame	Tecmo	●●●●	55
Fatal Frame 2: Crimson Butterfly	Tecmo	●●●●	77
Ferrari F355 Challenge	Sega	●●	61
FIFA 2001 Major League Soccer	EA Sports	●●●●◖	39
FIFA 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	51

WE DEMAND SATISFACTION!

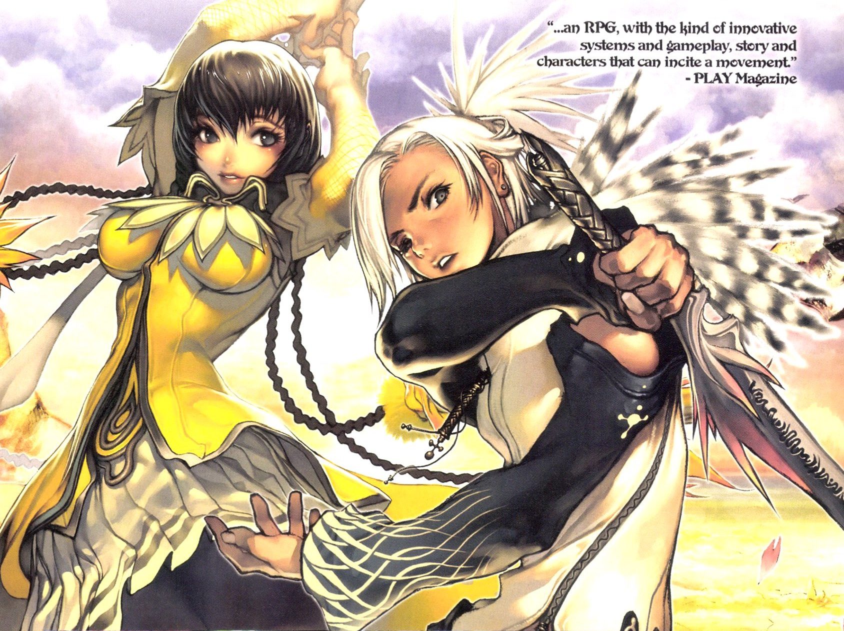
We're still dying for a sequel to the awesome (and generally underappreciated) *Freedom Fighters.* IO Interactive may be too busy working on *Hitman*, but dammit, we want more squad-based alternate-future Cold War action!

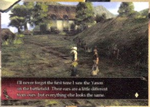
GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
FIFA Soccer 2003	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**63**
⚡FIFA Soccer 2004	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**75**
⚡FIFA Soccer 2005	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**86**
⚡FIFA Street	EA Sports	●●◖	91
Fight Club	Vivendi Universal	●◖	87
⚡Fight Night 2004	**EA Sports**	**●●●●**	**80**
⚡Fight Night Round 2	EA Sports	●●●●◖	91
Fighter Maker 2	Agetec	●◖	64
Final Fantasy X	**Square EA**	**●●●●●**	**53**
Final Fantasy X-2	**Square Enix USA**	**●●●●●**	**75**
⚡Final Fantasy XI	**Square Enix USA**	**●●●●●**	**78**
⚡Final Fantasy XI: Chains of Promathia	Square Enix USA	●●●●	87
Finding Nemo	**THQ**	**●●●◖**	**71**
Finny the Fish and the Seven Waters	Natsume	●●	91
Fireblade	Midway	●●◖	59
Fisherman's Challenge	Konami	●●	67
FlatOut	Empire Interactive	●●◖	95
Flipnic: Ultimate Pinball	Capcom	●●●	95
Ford Racing 2	Gotham Games	●●◖	76
Ford Racing 3	2K Games	●●●	94
Forever Kingdom	Agetec	●◖	53
Forgotten Realms: Demon Stone	Atari	●●●◖	86
Formula One 2001	Sony CEA	●●◖	50
Freaky Flyers	Midway	●●●◖	72
Freedom Fighters	**EA Games**	**●●●●●**	**73**
Freekstyle	**EA Sports Big**	**●●●●**	**59**
Freestyle Metal X	Midway	●●●	71
Frequency	Sony CEA	●●●◖	52
Frogger: The Great Quest	Konami	●◖	53
Frogger's Adventure: The Rescue	Konami	●●◖	76
Front Mission 4	Square Enix	●●●●	82
Fugitive Hunter	Encore	●	76
⚡Full Spectrum Warrior	THQ	●●●●	93
Fullmetal Alchemist	Square Enix	●●●	89
Fullmetal Alchemist 2: Curse of Crimson Elixir	Square Enix	●●●	96
Fur Fighters: Viggo's Revenge	Acclaim	●●●	46
Futurama	Vivendi Universal	●●◖	72
Future Tactics: The Uprising	Crave	●●●◖	81
G1 Jockey 3	Koei	●●●◖	69
Gadget Racers	Conspiracy	●●●◖	50
Galactic Wrestling Featuring Ultimate Muscle	Bandai	●●◖	82
Galerians: Ash	Sammy	●◖	66
Gallop Racer	Tecmo	●●	48
Gallop Racer 2003: A New Breed	Tecmo	●●●	69
Gallop Racer 2004	Tecmo	●●●●	85
Gauntlet: Dark Legacy	Midway	●●●◖	46
The Getaway	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●**	**66**
The Getaway: Black Monday	Sony CEA	●●	89
Get on da Mic	Eidos	●●	87
Ghosthunter	Namco	●●◖	84
Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex	Bandai	●●	87
⚡Ghost Recon 2	Ubisoft	●●●	89
Giants: Citizen Kabuto	Interplay	●●●◖	51
Gitaroo-Man	Koei	●●●◖	53
Gladiator: Sword of Vengeance	Acclaim	●●	75
Gladius	LucasArts	●●●●	74
Goblin Commander: Unleash the Horde	Jaleco	●●◖	76
God of War	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**92**
GoDai: Elemental Force	3DO	●◖	54
Godzilla: Save the Earth	Atari	●●◖	88
⚡GoldenEye: Rogue Agent	EA Games	●●●	89
Gradius III and IV	Konami	●●◖	39
Gradius V	Konami	●●●◖	85
Graffiti Kingdom	Hot-B	●●●●	93
Gran Turismo 3: A-spec	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**46**
Gran Turismo 4	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**91**
Grand Prix Challenge	Atari	●●●◖	68
Grand Theft Auto III	**Rockstar**	**●●●●●**	**52**
Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas	**Rockstar**	**●●●●●**	**87**
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	**Rockstar**	**●●●●●**	**63**
Grandia II	Ubisoft	●●●◖	53
Grandia Xtreme	Enix	●●●◖	62
Gravity Games Bike: Street, Vert, Dirt	Midway	◖	61
The Great Escape	Gotham Games	●●●◖	72
⚡Gretzky NHL 2005	Sony CEA	●●◖	88

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
⚡Growlanser Generations	Working Designs	●●●●	88
GTC Africa	Majesco	●●◖	58
Guilty Gear Isuka	Sammy	●●●●	86
Guilty Gear X	Majesco/Sammy	●●●●	51
Guilty Gear X2	Sammy	●●●●	66
Gungrave	Sega	●●●◖	61
Gungrave: Overdose	Mastiff	●●●◖	86
GunGriffon Blaze	Working Designs	●●●◖	39
The Guy Game	Gathering	●	85
Half-Life	**Sierra**	**●●●●●**	**51**
Harry Potter: Quidditch World Cup	**EA Games**	**●●●**	**75**
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone	EA Games	●◖	76
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	**EA Games**	**●●●◖**	**64**
Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban	EA Games	●●●●	82
Harvest Moon: Save the Homeland	Natsume	●●●●	51
Haunted Mansion	TDK	●●●	77
Haunting Ground	Capcom	●●◖	93
Haven: Call of the King	Midway	●●●◖	64
Headhunter	Acclaim	●●●	57
Headhunter: Redemption	Sega	●●●	86
Herdy Gerdy	Eidos	●●●	56
Heroes of Might and Magic	3DO	●●◖	46
Hidden Invasion	Conspiracy	●●●	60
High Heat MLB 2002	3DO	●●●●	44
High Heat MLB 2003	3DO	●●●●◖	55
High Heat MLB 2004	**3DO**	**●●●●●**	**67**
Hitman: Contracts	Eidos	●●●●◖	81
Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	**Eidos**	**●●●●◖**	**63**
The Hobbit	Vivendi Universal	●●●◖	76
Hot Shots Golf 3	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●**	**55**
⚡Hot Shots Golf Fore!	Sony CEA	●●●◖	85
⚡Hot Wheels: Stunt Track Challenge	THQ	●●●◖	89
Hot Wheels: Velocity X	THQ	●●◖	64
The Hulk	**Vivendi Universal**	**●●●●**	**70**
Hunter: The Reckoning–Wayward	Interplay	●●◖	72
Hypersonic Xtreme	Majesco	●●◖	67
I-Ninja	Namco	●●●◖	75
Ico	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**50**
In the Groove	RedOctane	●●●◖	94
The Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction	Vivendi Universal	●●●●◖	96
The Incredibles	THQ	●●●◖	88
Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb	LucasArts	●●●	71
Indy Car Series	Codemasters	●●●	71
Intellivision Lives!	Crave	●●●◖	77
Inuyasha: Fuedal Combat	Bandai	●●	97
Inuyasha: The Secret of the Cursed Mask	Bandai	●	89
Island Extreme Stunts	EA Games	●●●◖	65
The Italian Job	Eidos	●●	72
Jade Cocoon 2	Ubisoft	●●●◖	53
Jak and Daxter: The Precursor Legacy	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**52**
Jak II	**Sony CEA**	**●●●◖**	**74**
Jak 3	Sony CEA	●●●●◖	87
James Bond 007: Agent Under Fire	**EA Games**	**●●●●**	**52**
James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing	**EA Games**	**●●●●◖**	**79**
James Bond 007: NightFire	**EA Games**	**●●●●◖**	**64**
James Cameron's Dark Angel	Sierra	●●	65
Jeopardy!	Atari	●●◖	77
Jeremy McGrath Supercross World	Acclaim	●	53
Jet X20	Sony CEA	●●	63
Jimmy Neutron: Attack of the Twonkies	THQ	●●●	88
Jonny Moseley Mad Trix	3DO	●◖	54
Judge Dredd: Dredd vs. Death	Evolved Games	●●◖	80
Juiced	THQ	●●●◖	94
The Jungle Book: Rhythm n' Groove	Ubisoft	●●●	69
Jurassic Park: Op. Genesis	Universal Int.	●●●●◖	68
K-1 World Grand Prix	Konami	●●	71
Karaoke Revolution	Konami	●●●●	75
Karaoke Revolution Volume 2	Konami	●●●●◖	83
Karaoke Revolution Volume 3	Konami	●●●●◖	87
Katamari Damacy	Namco	●●●●◖	86
Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer	Activision	●●●◖	61
Kengo: Master of Bushido	Crave	●●●	42
Kessen	EA Games	●●●	39
Kessen II	Koei	●●●	51
Kessen III	Koei	●●●	91

An Epic Tale of War, Romance and Betrayal...

"...an RPG, with the kind of innovative systems and gameplay, story and characters that can incite a movement."
- PLAY Magazine





I'll never forget the first time I saw the Yason on the battlefield. Their ears are a little different from ours, but everything else looks the same.

Tenmei Keshut

PlayStation.2
DELUXE BOX SET
MAGNA CARTA
TEARS OF BLOOD
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PlayStation®2

RPG

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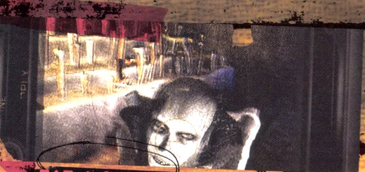
SCARIEST GAMES EVER

TURN OUT THE LIGHTS AND PREPARE TO BE TERRIFIED

As videogame technology has evolved, one of the most intriguing advancements has been games' ability to evoke emotion from the player. Nowhere is this more evident than in horror games. Through careful use of sound, lighting, camera, and music, these games take us to never-before-reached levels of terror. Want to know why films don't scare us at the theater anymore? The reason is right here.



FATAL FRAME

A robot could look at *Fatal Frame* and see only its flaws: The puzzles make little sense, perhaps, or it's too easy to squander the meager supply of ammo (that is, film) or health-ups. A human being, prone to flights of fancy and the occasional nightmare, will see the game in a very different light (or rather, lack of light—this is one game to play in the dark with the sound turned way, way up). The classic setting—a haunted house—and terrifying ghostly antagonists set the scene for a supremely unnerving experience, superior even to its sequel, *Crimson Butterfly*. It's not the most popular horror game, and perhaps not the best, but in our minds, it's easily the scariest.

Pub. Tecmo Dev. Tecmo

SILENT HILL 4: THE ROOM

The designers of *The Room* attempted a daring experiment, seriously revamping the beloved gameplay of the *Silent Hill* series for this unusual sequel. By setting part of the game in a "real-world" apartment (and putting the player into a first-person perspective therein), they explored what happens when nightmare monsters intrude into real life. The experiment paid off, resulting in one of the flat-out scariest *Silent Hills* yet. The game still has its "What the hell is *that?!*" moments that *Silent Hill* fans have grown to know and love, but it also throws unkillable enemies and inventory restrictions at you, making for a much more tension-filled experience overall.

Pub. Konami Dev. Konami

SIREN

Let's be honest: As a game, *Siren* is only moderately above average. Its stealthy puzzle aspects are often nonsensical, and its huge cast of characters makes the disjointed story even more confusing. But as an experience, *Siren* stands among the greats of the horror genre. It's not just seeing through the eyes of zombies via the innovative "sightjacking" feature or exploring creepy villages armed with only a flashlight—it's the whole package, from the incredibly disturbing sound to the bizarre face-mapping on the characters. It's an experience oozing with tension and moments of pure terror. Had the gameplay been on par, this could have been one of the best survival-horror games around, but even as it is, it's one of the most frightening.

Pub. Sony CEA Dev. Sony CEI

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Max Payne for its drug-dream sequences

Manhunt for making us feel dirty

Half-Life for leaping head crabs

Killer 7 for making us think we had gone completely and totally insane

RESIDENT EVIL (PS1)

From today's perspective, *Resident Evil*'s graphics are laughable. The character models are simplistic. The animation is stilted. The dialogue is so badly translated that it became legendary. But the game that kick-started the survival-horror genre is still one of the most frightening. Perhaps it's the simplistic premise that makes *Resident Evil* so powerful: Explore a creepy mansion and try not to get eaten by the walking dead (or their walking-dead pets). Perhaps it's the great zombie sound effects. Perhaps it's just that moment when those damn dogs jump through those damn windows. Whatever it is, *Resident Evil* set a bar for classic horror that even its sequels, with their more action-packed pacing, have yet to match.

Pub. Capcom Dev. Capcom

SILENT HILL (PS1)

Ah yes, the sleepy little resort town of Silent Hill, home to motels, boardwalks, amusement parks, and, oh yeah, a *portal to hell*. It's not the nurse zombies in the hospital that creep us out. It's not the devil dogs or the pterodactyls. It's the almost-invisible baby in the school. It's the pervasive fog and the unsettling, dynamic camera angles. It's the disturbing sound effects from the broken radio, or the other side of a door, or nowhere in particular. It's walking the streets of suburbia and turning a corner onto dementia. It's the kind of horror that gives you the heebie-jeebies more than it gives you nightmares, but it's still one of the best horror games available. The PS2 sequels may be superior in terms of presentation or scale, but with the possible exception of *The Room*, they haven't quite matched the original scare for scare.

Pub. Konami Dev. Konami

ON THE DVD

TRY BEFORE YOU BUY

All good things come to those who wait, and those of you who have lasted through the summer drought are being rewarded with a flood of games. Check out all the awesome options now available to you.

OFFICIAL U.S. PlayStation

PLAY IT

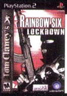
THAT'S NOT ALL!
Also on the disc for your playing pleasure are *Moto GP4*, *Crash Tag Team Racing*, and *Urban Reign*.

SOUL CALIBUR III

Try this month's cover game for yourself—sample the story mode, engage in a versus match, and get a taste of the character creation system.

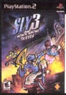
SW BATTLEFRONT II

May the Force be with you as you check out two of the awesome maps you'll find in the upcoming *Star Wars* fight fest.



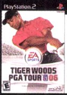
RAINBOW SIX: LOCKDOWN

Squad-based action is much better when it's not with the CHiPs squad, which is why we're glad Erik Estrada has not made a game.



SLY 3

Find out about Sly's back-story, play through three different missions, and try the game's multiplayer mode in this meaty demo.

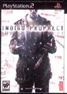


TIGER WOODS 06

Tiger is rich and is married to a model. You won't get either of those perks from this game, but you can see what it's like to be good at golf.

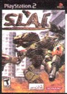
MARVEL NEMESIS

Countless message board threads have been devoted to who would win superhero battles; now there's a game to let you see if you were right.



INDIGO PROPHECY

If we told you that *Indigo Prophecy* was an awesomely scary adventure game, you might not believe us. But if you play it, you will.



S.L.A.I.

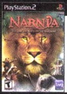
We say big giant robots. You say cool. We say big guns and invisible armor. You say cooler. We say quit reading and go play this demo now.

WATCH IT

AND DON'T MISS
an awesome interview with strong-chinned Bruce Campbell about *Evil Dead: Regeneration.*

X-MEN LEGENDS II

The only thing better than being a superhero is getting to be four of them at the same time. To see what that might be like, watch this!



CHRONICLES OF NARNIA

Do not go snooping in wardrobes unless you want to visit magical kingdoms and hang out with lions and fight witches and stuff.

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Producer Jessi Harrison
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PS1-DERLAND

THE YANKEE COMEBACK

JEREMY PARISH

When he's not trying to reclaim his vanished youth with obsolete games, Jeremy works as 1UP.com's features editor and charming mascot. Check out his blog at toastyfrog.1UP.com.

This little back corner of the magazine used to be occupied by a sports column. Me, I'm allergic to athletics, and I apologize if the title for this installment got any sports nuts' hopes up. No, the Yankees I have in mind are the doodle dandy variety—Americans. More specifically, Americans game designers.

Videogames were invented in the United States, but for years, you'd have been hard-pressed to find good American-made games... at least on consoles, anyway. Kids like me, who cut our gaming teeth on the NES or Genesis, sometimes forget that there's more to gaming than Japan. Just look back to the prehistory of videogames. *Tennis for Two*, *Space War*, *Pong*, and *Adventure*: all as American as the lightbulb, the automobile, or that nasty processed cheese they put on hamburgers.

Something awful happened in the early '80s, though. A cuddly alien reached out a glowing finger and destroyed the Atari 2600, bringing the American gaming industry to its knees. Of course, *E.T.* wasn't the only culprit in the not-so-great videogame crash, but it was certainly the most infamous. The net effect was that American powerhouses like Atari, Activision, and Coleco either went into hibernation or died outright.

For the budding Japanese gaming industry, America's crisis was a great opportunity, giving up-and-coming arcade companies like Nintendo and Sega a chance to try their hand at console manufacturing. As it happened, they were pretty good at it, and soon the worldwide console market was dominated by the East.

Of course, American gamemakers didn't just roll over and die; Western developers found a refuge in the growing PC platform. *SimCity*, *Prince of Persia*, *Civilization*, *Doom*—you've probably heard of them. But the console industry was largely the playground of the Japanese. And Atari's efforts to reclaim its former glory culminated in a big fat zero when the Jaguar bit the dust.

The current generation of gaming has seen a huge resurgence in the importance of Western development. From *Ratchet* to *Jak*, from *Halo* to *GTA*, Western game design has, arguably, become much livelier than the frequently stagnant ideas trickling out of Japan. And the PlayStation was where Western console development was resuscitated.

While big Japanese franchises like *Resident Evil* and *Final Fantasy* dominated the system early in its life, American and British designers (among others) really seemed to warm up to the PS1 and its powerful 3D graphics. Naughty Dog, 16-bit veterans, gave Sony a mascot boost with *Crash Bandicoot* and became a top-shelf developer. Newcomer Insomniac created the PS1's answer to N64-quality 3D platforming, *Spyro the Dragon*. The hit parade stretches for miles: *Tomb Raider*, *Twisted Metal*, *Soul Reaver*, *Warhawk*, *Colony Wars*, *Rayman*, *Abe's Oddysee*...suddenly, Western games were about more than just sports.

Not to say that we've fallen out of love with those Japanese games that dominated the 8- and 16-bit eras, of course. Still, you have to admit: It's always nice to see the home team rally for a comeback. «

FOR JAPAN, AMERICA'S CRISIS WAS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY.

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
kill.switch	Namco	●●●●◖	75
Killer 7	Capcom	●●◖	95
⚡Killzone	Sony CEA	●●●●	87
Kinetica	Sony CEA	●●●●◖	50
King Arthur	Konami	●	88
King of Fighters 2000/2001	SNK Playmore	●●◖	76
King of Fighters 2002/2003	SNK Playmore	●●●●	88
King of Fighters: Maximum Impact	SNK Playmore	●●●	87
The King of Route 66	Sega	●●●	67
King's Field: The Ancient City	Agetec	●●	55
Kingdom Hearts	**Square EA**	**●●●●◖**	**61**
Klonoa 2: Lunatea's Veil	Namco	●●●●◖	47
Knockout Kings 2001	EA Sports	●●●●	42
Knockout Kings 2002	EA Sports	●●●●	55
Kuon	Agetec	●●◖	87
Kya: Dark Lineage	Atari	●●◖	76
La Pucelle: Tactics	Mastiff	●●●●	81
Le Mans 24 Hours	Infogrames	●●◖	48
Legacy of Kain: Defiance	Eidos	●●◖	76
Legaia 2: Duel Saga	Fresh Games	●●●	63
The Legend of Alon D'ar	Ubisoft	●◖	54
The Legend of Kay	Capcom	●●●	97
Legends of Wrestling	Acclaim	●●◖	53
Legends of Wrestling II	Acclaim	●●●	65
Legion: The Legend of Excalibur	Midway	●●●	59
Lego Racers 2	Lego Media	●●◖	51
Lego Star Wars	Giant Int.	●●●●	92
Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude	Vivendi Universal	●●◖	87
Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events	Activision	●●	89
Lethal Skies	Sammy	●●●	58
Lethal Skies II	Sammy	●●●◖	74
Looney Tunes: Back in Action	EA Games	●	76
The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring	Black Label	●●●◖	63

CREEPY

One of the developers of the *Legacy of Kain* series once told us that serious *Kain* fans are very, very serious. Apparently a fan once stalked Mike Bell, the voice of Raziel, going so far as to repeatedly send dead flowers (in true Goth-courtship fashion) to his house. Don't try this, folks.

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
⚡The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King	**EA Games**	**●●●●●**	**75**
The Lord of the Rings: The Third Age	EA Games	●●	88
The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers	**EA Games**	**●●●●◖**	**63**
Lowrider	Jaleco	●◖	77
Lupin the 3rd: Treasure of the Sorcerer King	Bandai	●●●◖	78
Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter	Vivendi Universal	●●	71
Mad Maestro!	Eidos/Fresh	●●●	56
Madagascar	Activision	●●●	96
Madden NFL 2001	EA Sports	●●●●◖	38
Madden NFL 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	48
⚡Madden NFL 2003	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**60**
⚡Madden NFL 2004	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**72**
⚡Madden NFL 2005	EA Sports	●●●●◖	83
⚡Madden NFL 06	EA Sports	●●●●◖	96
Mafia	Gathering	●●●◖	79
Magic Pengel: The Quest for Color	Agetec	●●●●	69
⚡Major League Baseball 2K5	2K Games	●●●●	91
Makai Kingdom	NIS America	●●●◖	96
Malice	Mud Duck	●●◖	84
Manhunt	**Rockstar**	**●●●◖**	**76**
The Mark of Kri	Sony CEA	●●●	59
Marvel vs. Capcom 2	Capcom	●●●●	61
Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX 2	Activision	●●●●	60
Max Payne	**Rockstar**	**●●●●**	**53**
Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne	Rockstar	●●●◖	77
Maximo: Ghosts to Glory	**Capcom**	**●●●◖**	**54**
Maximo vs. Army of Zin	Capcom	●●●●	77
McFarlane's Evil Prophecy	Konami	◖	84
MDK2 Armageddon	Interplay	●●●◖	45
Medal of Honor: European Assault	EA Games	●●●●	95
Medal of Honor: Frontline	**EA Games**	**●●●●●**	**58**
⚡Medal of Honor: Rising Sun	**EA Games**	**●●●◖**	**76**
Mega Man Anniversary Collection	Capcom	●●●◖	83

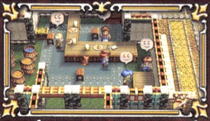
GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Mega Man X: Command Mission	Capcom	●●●◖	86
Mega Man X7	Capcom	●●●◖	74
Mega Man X8	Capcom	●●●	88
Men in Black II: Alien Escape	Infogrames	●●◖	60
Mercenaries	LucasArts	●●●●◖	89
Metal Arms: Glitch in the System	Vivendi Universal	●●●●	75
Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty	**Konami**	**●●●●●**	**51**
Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance	**Konami**	**●●●●●**	**67**
Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater	**Konami**	**●●●●●**	**88**
Metropolismania	Natsume	●●●	61
Midnight Club	**Rockstar**	**●●●●**	**39**
⚡Midnight Club II	**Rockstar**	**●●●●●**	**67**
⚡Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition	Rockstar	●●●●	93
Midway Arcade Treasures	Midway	●●●◖	76
Midway Arcade Treasures 2	Midway	●●●●	87
Mike Tyson Heavyweight Boxing	Codemasters	●	58
Minority Report	Activision	●●◖	65
Mission: Impossible–Operation Surma	Atari	●●	77
Mister Mosquito	Eidos/Fresh	●●●◖	56
MLB 2004	Sony CEA	●●●	67
⚡MLB 2005	Sony CEA	●●●◖	80
⚡MLB 2006	Sony CEA	●●●◖	91
MLB SlugFest 20-03	Midway	●●●●	59
MLB SlugFest 20-04	Midway	●●●●	67
⚡MLB SlugFest: Loaded	Midway	●●●◖	83
Mobile Light Force 2	XS Games	●●●◖	69
Mobile Suit Gundam: Encounters in Space	Bandai	●	75
Mobile Suit Gundam: Federation vs. Zeon	Bandai	●●●◖	61
Mobile Suit Gundam: Gundam vs. Zeta Gundam	Bandai	●●●	96
Mobile Suit Gundam: Journey to Jaburo	Bandai	●	48
Mobile Suit Gundam: Zeonic Front	Bandai	●●●	54
Mojo!	Crave	●●◖	73
Monopoly Party	Infogrames	●●●	65

The Legend of Heroes™

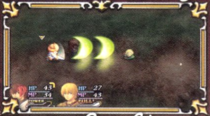
On his quest for light, will Avin survive the darkness?

In the post-Gagharv era, the land of El Phildin is consumed by a bitter war. As its citizens fight to survive, one will be taken by the darkness.

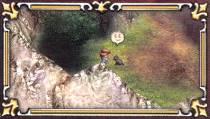
As time has passed and light returns, wounds heal and lives move on – except for one. On his quest to free his sister, will Avin be prepared for what he finds?



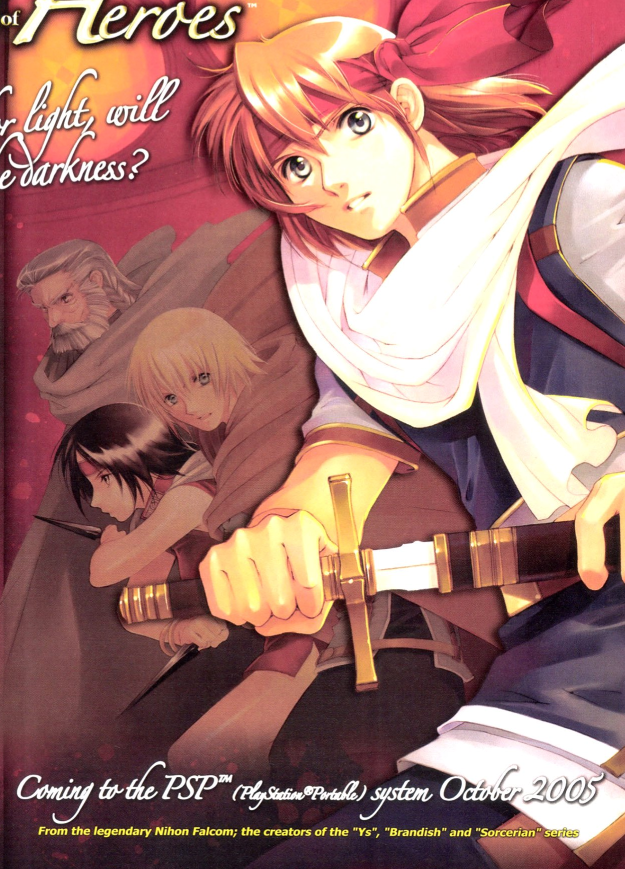
Classic RPG Game Play



Over 50 hours of Adventure



Unique Pet System



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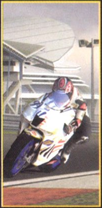
GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Monster 4x4: Masters of Metal	Ubisoft	●●◖	77
Monster Hunter	Capcom	●●●●	86
Monster Rancher 3	Tecmo	●●●●	50
Monster Rancher 4	Tecmo	●●●◖	75
Monsters, Inc.	Sony CEA	●●●◖	55
Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance	**Midway**	**●●●●**	**64**
⚡Mortal Kombat: Deception	Midway	●●●●	87
MotoGP	Namco	●●●●	39
MotoGP 2	Namco	●●●●◖	53
MotoGP 3	Namco	●●●●◖	67
Motor Mayhem	Infogrames	●●●	47
MTV Music Generator 2	Codemasters	●●●	46
MTV Music Generator 3: This Is the Remix	Codemasters	●●●◖	82
MTV's Celebrity Deathmatch	Gotham Games	●◖	76
⚡MTX: Mototrax	Activision	●●◖	80
The Mummy Returns	Universal	●◖	52
Musashi Samurai Legend	Square Enix	●●●	91
Music Maker	Magix	●●●●	69
MVP Baseball 2003	EA Sports	●●●◖	67
⚡MVP Baseball 2004	EA Sports	●●●●◖	80
⚡MVP Baseball 2005	EA Sports	●●●●◖	91
MX 2002 Featuring Ricky Carmichael	THQ	●●●●	47
MX Rider	Infogrames	●●●◖	52
MX Superfly Featuring Ricky Carmichael	THQ	●●●◖	59
MX Unleashed	**THQ**	**●●●**	**79**
⚡MX vs. ATV Unleashed	THQ	●●●●	91
⚡My Street	Sony CEA	●●●	67
Myst III: Exile	Ubisoft	●●●◖	63
Mystic Heroes	Koei	●●◖	64
Namco Museum	**Namco**	**●●●◖**	**53**
Nano Breaker	Konami	●●◖	90
NARC	Midway	◖	93
NASCAR 2001	EA Sports	●●◖	40
⚡NASCAR 2005: Chase for the Cup	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**85**
⚡NASCAR 06: Total Team Control	EA Sports	●●●●◖	97
NASCAR Heat	Infogrames	●●●●	47
NASCAR Thunder 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	51
NASCAR Thunder 2003	**EA Sports**	**●●●●◖**	**62**
⚡NASCAR Thunder 2004	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**73**
NASCAR: Dirt to Daytona	Infogrames	●●●◖	63
Naval Ops: Warship Gunner	Koei	●●●	71
NBA 2K2	**Sega Sports**	**●●●●●**	**53**
⚡NBA 2K3	**Sega Sports**	**●●●●●**	**63**
NBA Ballers	**Midway Sports**	**●●●●**	**80**
NBA Hoopz	Midway	●●●	44
NBA Jam 2004	Acclaim	●●◖	75
NBA Live 2001	EA Sports	●●●	42
NBA Live 2002	EA Sports	●●◖	51
⚡NBA Live 2003	EA Sports	●●●●	63
⚡NBA Live 2004	EA Sports	●●●●◖	75
⚡NBA Live 2005	EA Sports	●●●●	86
NBA ShootOut 2001	Sony CEA	●●◖	44
NBA ShootOut 2003	Sony CEA	●●●	63
⚡NBA ShootOut 2004	Sony CEA	●●●	75
NBA Starting Five	Konami	●●◖	63
NBA Street	**EA Sports Big**	**●●●●●**	**47**
NBA Street Vol. 2	**EA Sports Big**	**●●●●●**	**68**
⚡NBA Street V3	EA Sports Big	●●●●◖	90
⚡NCAA College Basketball 2K3	Sega Sports	●●●●	64
NCAA College Football 2K3	Sega Sports	●●◖	60
NCAA Final Four 2001	Sony CEA	●	41
NCAA Final Four 2002	Sony CEA	●◖	52
NCAA Final Four 2003	Sony CEA	●●◖	64
⚡NCAA Final Four 2004	Sony CEA	●●	76
NCAA Football 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	48
NCAA Football 2003	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**60**
⚡NCAA Football 2004	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**71**
⚡NCAA Football 2005	EA Sports	●●●●◖	83
⚡NCAA Football 06	Konami	●●	95
NCAA GameBreaker 2001	Sony CEA	●◖	41
NCAA GameBreaker 2003	Sony CEA	●●	61
⚡NCAA GameBreaker 2004	Sony CEA	●●◖	73
NCAA March Madness 2002	EA Sports	●●●	53
NCAA March Madness 2003	EA Sports	●●●	64
⚡NCAA March Madness 2004	EA Sports	●●●●	76



PLAY IT NOW!

Want to get your crotch rocket on? The *MotoGP* series is realistic enough to be regarded as the two-wheeled *Gran Turismo*. Check out the *MotoGP 4* demo on this month's disc.

RPG ODDITY

Do you like your RPGs quirky? Check out *Phantom Brave*, a strategy-RPG from Nippon Ichi, the developer of the deliciously offbeat *Disgaea: Hour of Darkness, La Pucelle, Makai Kingdom*, and *Rhapsody*.

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
⚡NCAA March Madness 2005	EA Sports	●●●◖	88
Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2	**EA Games**	**●●●●●**	**62**
⚡Need for Speed Underground	**EA Games**	**●●●●◖**	**76**
⚡Need for Speed Underground 2	**EA Games**	**●●●●●**	**87**
Neo Contra	Konami	●●●◖	87
NFL 2K2	**Sega Sports**	**●●●◖**	**52**
⚡NFL 2K3	Sega Sports	●●●●◖	60
NFL Blitz 20-02	Midway	●●●●	55
NFL Blitz 20-03	Midway	●●●◖	60
⚡NFL Blitz Pro	Midway Sports	●●●	74
NFL GameDay 2001	Sony CEA	●	40
NFL GameDay 2002	Sony CEA	●◖	53
⚡NFL GameDay 2003	Sony CEA	●●◖	61
⚡NFL GameDay 2004	Sony CEA	●●●	73
NFL Quarterback Club 2001	Acclaim	●●◖	50
⚡NFL Street	**EA Sports Big**	**●●●●◖**	**78**
⚡NFL Street 2	EA Sports Big	●●●◖	89
NHL 2001	EA Sports	●●●●	38
NHL 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	50
NHL 2003	EA Sports	●●●◖	63
⚡NHL 2004	EA Sports	●●●●	73
⚡NHL 2005	EA Sports	●●●◖	85
⚡NHL 06	EA Sports	●●●	96
NHL 2K3	**Sega Sports**	**●●●●●**	**64**
NHL FaceOff 2001	Sony CEA	●●●◖	43
NHL FaceOff 2003	Sony CEA	●●	64
NHL Hitz 20-02	Midway	●●●●	51
NHL Hitz 20-03	Midway	●●●●◖	62
⚡NHL Hitz Pro	Midway	●●●●	73
Nick Toons: Movin'	THQ	●●●	88
Nightmare of Druaga	Namco	●●	87
Ninja Assault	Namco	●●◖	61
No One Lives Forever	Sierra	●●●◖	56
Obscure	DreamCatcher	●●	93
Okage: Shadow King	Sony CEA	●●●	51
Oni	Rockstar	●◖	43
Onimusha: Warlords	**Capcom**	**●●●●**	**43**
Onimusha 2: Samurai's Destiny	Capcom	●●●●	60
Onimusha 3: Demon Siege	Capcom	●●●●◖	81
Orphen: Scion of Sorcery	Activision	●●●	39
⚡Outlaw Golf 2	Global Star	●◖	88
⚡Outlaw Tennis	Global Star	●●●◖	97
Pac-Man Fever	Namco	●●	60
Pac-Man World 2	**Namco**	**●●●●◖**	**54**
PaRappa the Rapper 2	Sony CEA	●●●◖	53
Paris-Dakar Rally	Acclaim	●●	53
Phantom Brave	NIS America	●●●●◖	85
Pinball Hall of Fame	Crave	●◖	90
Pirates: The Legend of Black Kat	EA Games	●●●◖	55
Pitfall: The Lost Expedition	Activision	●●	80
Playboy: The Mansion	Arush Ent.	●●	91
The Polar Express	THQ	●●●	88
Pool Paradise	Ignition	●●●◖	83
Portal Runner	3DO	●●	50
Power Drome	Mud Duck	●	84
Power Rangers: Dino Thunder	THQ	●●	88
The Powerpuff Girls: Relish Rampage	Bam	●●	65
Predator: Concrete Jungle	Vivendi Universal	●●◖	94
Pride FC	THQ	●●●●	65
Primal	Sony CEA	●●●●	68
Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time	**Ubisoft**	**●●●●●**	**75**
Prince of Persia: Warrior Within	Ubisoft	●●●●	88
Pro Race Driver	Codemasters	●●●●◖	65
Project Eden	Eidos	●●●◖	52
⚡Project: Snowblind	Eidos	●●●●	91
Pryzm Chapter One: The Dark Unicorn	TDK Mediactive	●●◖	60
Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy	Midway	●●●●◖	82
Psychonauts	Majesco	●●●●	95
P.T.O. IV	Koei	●●●	66
Pump It Up: Exceed	Mastiff	●●●	97
The Punisher	THQ	●●●◖	90
Q-Ball Billiards Master	Take-Two	●●●◖	40
Quake III: Revolution	EA Games	●●●●◖	44
R: Racing Evolution	Namco	●●●●	76
R-Type Final	Eidos/Fresh Games	●●●●	78

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Radiata Stories	Square Enix	●●●◖	97
Rally Fusion: Race of Champions	Activision	●●●	64
Rapala Pro Fishing	Activision	●●◖	85
Ratchet & Clank	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**63**
Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**75**
⚡Ratchet & Clank: Up Your Arsenal	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**87**
Rayman 2: Revolution	**Ubisoft**	**●●●●●**	**41**
Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc	Ubisoft	●●●◖	67
Rayman Arena	Ubisoft	●●●◖	57
RC Revenge Pro	Acclaim	●●◖	41
Ready 2 Rumble Boxing Round 2	Midway	●●●●	40
Real Pool	Infogrames	●●●◖	40
Red Card Soccer 20-03	Midway	●●●	57
Red Dead Revolver	Rockstar	●●●●	82
Red Faction	**THQ**	**●●●●●**	**46**
Red Faction II	THQ	●●●●	63
Red Ninja: End of Honor	Vivendi Universal	●●	92
Reel Fishing III	Natsume	●●●●	72
Reign of Fire	Bam	●●●◖	63
Resident Evil Code: Veronica X	**Capcom**	**●●●●◖**	**48**
Resident Evil: Dead Aim	Capcom	●●●◖	70
⚡Resident Evil Outbreak	Capcom	●●●◖	81
⚡Resident Evil Outbreak: File #2	Capcom	●◖	92
Return to Castle Wolfenstein: OR	Activision	●●●◖	71
Rez	Sega	●●●●◖	53
Ribbit King	Bandai	●●●	82
Ridge Racer V	Namco	●●●●◖	38
Riding Spirits	Bam	●●●◖	61
Ring of Red	Konami	●●●●	43
Rise of the Kasai	Sony CEA	●●●◖	92
Rise to Honor	**Sony CEA**	**●●●**	**78**
⚡Risk: Global Domination	Atari	●●●●	73
RLH: Run Like Hell	Interplay	●●●	62
Road Kill	Midway	●●●●	74
Road Trip	Conspiracy	●●●●	61
Robin Hood: Defender of the Crown	Capcom	●●◖	74
Robotech: Invasion	Global Star	●●●	86
Robots	Vivendi Universal	●	92
Rocky	Ubisoft	●●●●	64
Rocky Legends	Ubisoft	●●◖	87
Robot Alchemic Drive	Enix	●●●●	63
Robotech: Battlecry	TDK	●●●◖	62
Rogue Ops	Kemco	●●◖	75
Romance of the Three Kingdoms VII	Koei	●●◖	60
Romance of the Three Kingdoms VIII	Koei	●●●	73
Romance of the Three Kingdoms X	Koei	●●●◖	94
RPG Maker 2	Agetec	●●●◖	74
RTX Red Rock	LucasArts	●●	71
Rugby	EA Sports	●●●◖	48
Rugby 2004	EA Sports	●●●	73
Rugby 2005	EA Sports	●●◖	91
Rumble Racing	EA Games	●●●●◖	45
Rumble Roses	Konami	●●●	88
Rune: Viking Warlord	Take-Two	●●◖	48
Rygar: The Legendary Adventure	Tecmo	●●●●◖	64
Salt Lake 2002	Eidos	●●◖	55
Samurai Jack: The Shadow of Aku	Sega	●●●●	80
Samurai Warriors	Koei/EA	●●●●	81
Samurai Warriors: Xtreme Legends	Koei	●●●	88
Samurai Western	Atlus	●●●	94
Saturday Night Speedway	Atari	●●◖	81
Savage Skies	Bam	●●●	56
Scaler	Global Star	●●●●	88
Scooby-Doo! Mystery Mayhem	THQ	●●●	81
Scooby-Doo! Night of 100 Frights	**THQ**	**●●●**	**58**
The Scorpion King: Rise of the Akkadian	Universal	●●	62
SD Gundam Force: Showdown!	Bandai	●●●◖	88
Second Sight	Codemasters	●●●●	86
Secret Weapons Over Normandy	LucasArts	●●●●	75
Seek and Destroy	Conspiracy	●●●◖	66
Sega Bass Fishing Duel	Sega	●●●	62
Sega Classics Collection	Sega	●●	90
Sega Soccer Slam	Sega Sports	●●	62
Sega Sports Tennis	Sega Sports	●●●●◖	60
Sega Superstars	Sega	●●●●	88

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PlayStation®2

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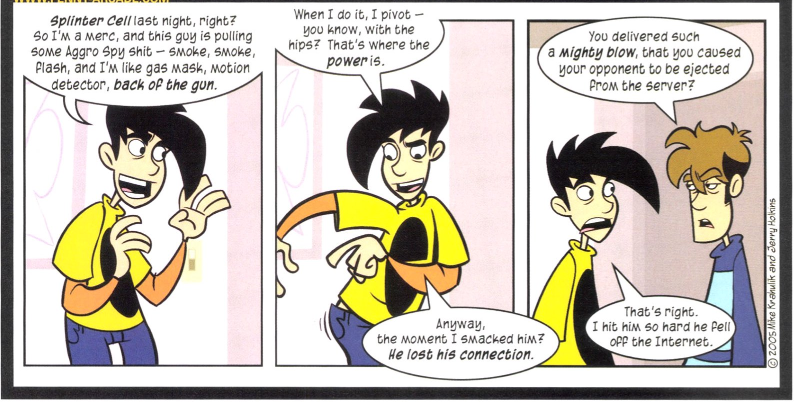
Splinter Cell last night, right? So I'm a merc, and this guy is pulling some Aggro Spy shit – smoke, smoke, flash, and I'm like gas mask, motion detector, **back of the gun**.
When I do it, I pivot – you know, with the hips? That's where the **power** is.
Anyway, the moment I smacked him? **He lost his connection.**
You delivered such a **mighty blow**, that you caused your opponent to be ejected from the server?
That's right. I hit him so hard he fell off the Internet.
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READER REVIEWS

SOWING DEATH AND REAPING SOULS

KILLER 7

WHAT YOU SAID

"This game is quite awkward and freaky—and quite frustrating. The freaky factor came to me in two forms: One haunts me, and the other popped up in seemingly every level. The first one was the boss battle (the first one that could actually be called that) with Andrei Ulmeyda, after being infected by the Heaven Smiles. The guy just looked creepy, and he was downright impossible to kill. He may be slow as heck, but navigating those ambulances is hard—and getting behind him to shoot his Afros is even harder, especially with the screwed-up controls. The other freaky thing was Suzie. You know, the head that popped up in small places, told you a creepy story, then gave you a ring. There was one other downfall: the lack of areas to play as Harman, who despite being old and slow (and not as good at fighting as everyone makes him out to be) was the coolest character of the bunch! The only fun part of the game was the ability to switch characters."

[●●◐○○]

Colton Watt

WHAT WE SAID

"Ultimately, it's the style and absurdity that make *Killer 7* bearable."

[●●◐○○]

DEATH, JR.

WHAT YOU SAID

"I don't think *Death, Jr.* quite falls under the platformer category, and yet it isn't anything else. It's a mutt. I think what really sets this game apart is the use of the scythe. It's a weapon. It's a tool. It looks really goofy and makes DJ waddle. It can be used in stylish combos or to pull DJ up to that just-too-far platform. And while there are the generic platforming elements of jumping across lava, hitting switches, etc. (but oddly no double-jump), the game just doesn't come across as a plain old platformer. You end up with a full arsenal of guns, special scythe attacks, and hamsters. (Yes, hamsters—pink ones with C4 strapped to their backs!) In your quest to free your friends from the evil demon Moloch, you end up in crazy and fun places like a theme park devoted to meat, DJ's school, and a huge city. I only have minor complaints. The game will sometimes teach you something that you will (almost) never use throughout the entire game. Also, the camera is fairly hard to use with only one button, and enemies can be hard to keep track of in a fast-paced fight. Although *Death, Jr.* is slightly flawed, it made for a very fun and enjoyable experience overall, and it's great to pick up and play."

[●●●●◐]

Nick Horowitz

WHAT WE SAID

"You play cameraman more than gunslinger, constantly fighting to center your view on an enemy. [*Death, Jr.* is] a monotonous shooter with a crippled camera and a crush on *Psychonauts*."

[●●◐○○]

Want to have your say about a recent game? Send your review (don't forget the score!) to opm@ziffdavis.com with the subject "READER REVIEW."

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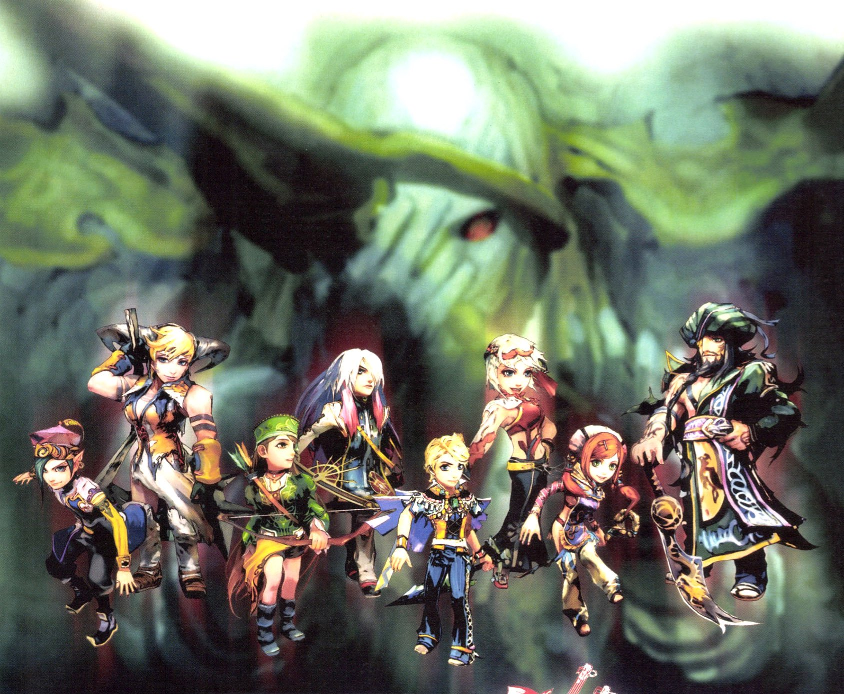

Encounter unique stories by playing eight different characters

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I'm an imperial guard, so I can't be with her all the time. Be a pal, huh? For old times' sake?

I accept.
No, thanks.

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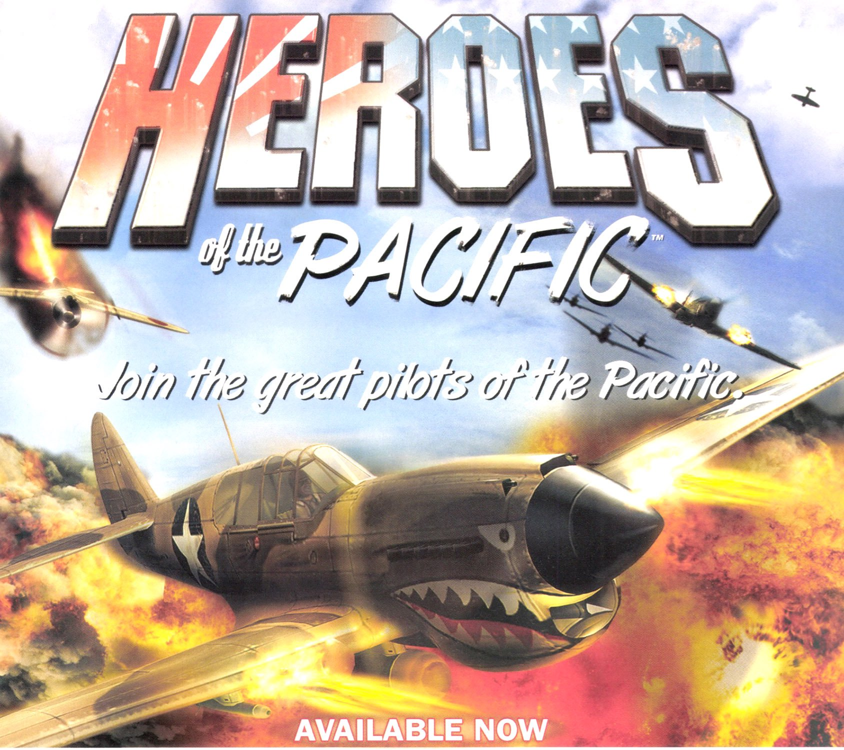
PlayStation®2

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
⚡Serious Sam: Next Encounter	Global Star	●●●◖	81
Seven Samurai 20XX	Sammy	●●	80
Shadow Hearts	Midway	●●●●	52
Shadow Hearts: Covenant	Midway	●●●●	86
Shadow of Destiny	Konami	●●●◖	43
Shadow of Rome	Capcom	●●●●	89
Shadow of the Colossus	Sony CEA	●●●●◖	97
Shadow Man: 2econd Coming	Acclaim	●●	57
Shaman King: Power of Spirit	Konami	●●◖	89
Shark Tale	Activision	●●◖	88
Shaun Palmer's Pro Snowboarder	Activision	●●◖	52
ShellShock: Nam '67	Eidos	●●	85
Shifters	3DO	●	58
Shin Megami Tensei: Digital Devil Saga	Atlus	●●●●	92
Shin Megami Tensei: Nocturne	Atlus	●●●●◖	86
Shining Tears	Sega	●●●	90
Shinobi	Sega	●●●◖	63
Showdown: Legends of Wrestling	Acclaim	●◖	83
Shox	EA Sports Big	●●●◖	63
Shrek 2	**Activision**	●●●◖	**82**
Shrek Super Party	TDK Mediactive	●●◖	64
Siren	Sony CEA	●●●	81
Silent Hill 2	**Konami**	●●●●◖	**50**
Silent Hill 3	Konami	●●●●◖	71
Silent Hill 4: The Room	Konami	●●●●◖	85
Silent Line: Armored Core	Agetec	●●●◖	70
Silent Scope	Konami	●●●	39
Silent Scope 2	Konami	●●●◖	49
Silent Scope 3	Konami	●●●◖	62
Silpheed: The Lost Planet	Working Designs	●●●◖	40
The Simpsons: Hit & Run	**Vivendi Universal**	●●●●	**72**
The Simpsons: Road Rage	**EA Games**	●●●	**52**
The Simpsons Skateboard ing	EA Games	●◖	64
The Sims	**EA Games**	●●●●	**65**
⚡The Sims: Bustin' Out	**EA Games**	●●●●◖	**76**
Sitting Ducks	Hip Interactive	●●●	88
Sky Gunner	Atlus	●●●◖	58
Sky Odyssey	Activision	●●●	40
Sled Storm	EA Sports Big	●●●◖	55
Sly Cooper and the Thievius Raccoonus	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**62**
Sly 2: Band of Thieves	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**86**
Smash Cars	Metro3D	●●●◖	71
Smash Court Tennis: Pro Tournament	Namco	●●●◖	56
Smash Court Tennis: Pro Tournament 2	Namco	●●●●	82
Smuggler's Run	**Rockstar**	●●●●◖	**39**
Smuggler's Run 2: Hostile Territory	Rockstar	●●●●◖	52
Soccer America: International Cup	Hot-B	●●	48
Soccer Mania	EA/Lego	●●●◖	59
⚡SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**60**
⚡SOCOM II: U.S. Navy SEALs	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**75**
Soldier of Fortune	Majesco	●●●	52
Sonic Heroes	Sega	●●	77
Sonic Mega Collection	Sega	●●●	88
Soul Calibur II	**Namco**	●●●●●	**72**
Soul Reaver 2	Eidos	●●●	52
Space Channel 5 Special Edition	Sega	●●●◖	75
Space Race	Infogrames	●●◖	59
Spawn Armageddon	Namco	●◖	76
Speed Kings	Acclaim	●●●●	70
Sphinx and the Cursed Mummy	THQ	●●●◖	75
Spider-Man	**Activision**	●●●●◖	**57**
Spider-Man 2	Activision	●●●◖	84
Splashdown	Infogrames	●●●●	52
Splashdown: Rides Gone Wild	**THQ**	●●●●●	**72**
SpongeBob SquarePants: Battle for Bikini Bottom	**THQ**	●●●●◖	**75**
SpongeBob SquarePants: The Movie	THQ	●●●●◖	87
Spy Fiction	Sammy	●●	85
SpyHunter	**Midway**	●●●●◖	**50**
SpyHunter 2	Midway	●●●	76
Spyro: Enter the Dragonfly	**Vivendi Universal**	●●●	**64**
Spyro: A Hero's Tail	Vivendi Universal	●●	87
⚡SRS: Street Racing Syndicate	Namco	●●●	64
SSX	**EA Sports Big**	●●●●●	**38**
SSX Tricky	**EA Sports Big**	●●●●●	**52**
⚡SSX 3	**EA Sports Big**	●●●●●	**74**
Star Ocean: Till the End of Time	Square Enix	●●●●	84
Star Trek: Shattered Universe	TDK	●●	75
Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force	Majesco	●●◖	53
Star Wars: The Clone Wars	LucasArts	●●●	65
Star Wars Battlefront	LucasArts	●●●●◖	86
Star Wars Bounty Hunter	**LucasArts**	●●●	**64**
Star Wars: Episode III ROTS	LucasArts	●●●	94
Star Wars Jedi Starfighter	LucasArts	●●●◖	56
Star Wars Racer Revenge	LucasArts	●●●●◖	55
Star Wars Starfighter	**LucasArts**	●●●●◖	**43**
Star Wars Super Bombad Racing	LucasArts	●●	45
Starsky & Hutch	Gotham Games	●●	74
State of Emergency	**Rockstar**	●●●	**55**
Stella Deus: The Gate of Eternity	Atlus	●●●●	93
Stitch: Experiment 626	Sony CEA	●●◖	59
Stolen	Hip Interactive	●●●	94
Street Fighter Anniversary Collection	Capcom	●●●●	84
Street Fighter EX 3	Capcom	●●●◖	39
Street Hoops	**Activision**	●●●◖	**60**
Stretch Panic	Conspiracy	●●●◖	47
Strike Force Bowling	Crave	●◖	82
Stuntman	**Infogrames/Atari**	●●●	**59**
Sub Rebellion	Metro3D	●●●●	62
The Suffering	Midway	●●●	80
Suikoden III	Konami	●●●	63
Suikoden IV	Konami	●●●	89
Summer Heat Beach Volleyball	Acclaim	●●●◖	72
Summoner	THQ	●●●	39
Summoner 2	THQ	●●●◖	62
Sunny Garcia Surfing	Ubisoft	●●●◖	51
Super Bust-A-Move	Acclaim	●●●	41
Super Bust-A-Move 2	Ubisoft	●●●◖	63
Super Monkey Ball Deluxe	Sega	●●●	92
Super Trucks Racing	XS Games	●◖	76
Supercar Street Challenge	Activision	●●◖	52
Superman: Shadow of Apokolips	Atari	●●●◖	63
Surfing H30	Rockstar	●●	40
SWAT: Global Strike Team	Sierra	●●●	74
Swing Away Golf	EA Games	●●●	38
⚡Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain	Sony CEA	●●●	81
Taiko: Drum Master	Namco	●●●●	87
Tak and the Power of Juju	**THQ**	●●●◖	**75**
Tak 2: The Staff of Dreams	THQ	●●●◖	88
Tarzan: Untamed	Ubisoft	●●●◖	52
Taz: Wanted	Infogrames	●●●◖	60
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	Konami	●●◖	75
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2	Konami	●	86
Tekken 4	**Namco**	●●●◖	**61**
Tekken 5	Namco	●●●●	92
Tekken Tag Tournament	**Namco**	●●●●◖	**39**
Technic Beat	Mastiff	●●●	89
Tenchu: Fatal Shadows	Sega	●●	90
Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven	Activision	●●●	67
The Terminator: Dawn of Fate	Atari	●●◖	63
Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines	Atari	●◖	77
Terminator 3: The Redemption	Atari	●●●◖	86
Test Drive	**Infogrames**	●●●◖	**58**
Test Drive Off-Road: Wide Open	Infogrames	●●●	48
Test Drive: Eve of Destruction	Atari	●●●●	85
Tetris Worlds	THQ	●●	57
Theme Park Roller Coaster	EA Games	●●●●	41
The Thing	Universal	●●●	62
Thunderstrike: Operation Phoenix	Eidos	●◖	52
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2001	EA Sports	●●●	44
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2002	EA Sports	●●●●	55
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2003	EA Sports	●●●●◖	63
⚡Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004	**EA Sports**	●●●●●	**73**
⚡Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2005	EA Sports	●●●●◖	86
Time Crisis 2	Namco	●●●●	49
Time Crisis 3	Namco	●●●●◖	74
Time Crisis: Crisis Zone	Namco	●●●◖	86
TimeSplitters	**Eidos**	●●●●●	**39**
TimeSplitters 2	**Eidos**	●●●●●	**63**
⚡TimeSplitters: Future Perfect	**EA Games**	●●●●●	**91**
TOCA Race Driver 2	Codemasters	●●●●	86
Tokyo Xtreme Racer 3	Crave	●●	76
Tokyo Xtreme Racer Zero	Crave	●●◖	45
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	**Ubisoft**	●●●◖	**65**
⚡Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Jungle Storm	Ubisoft	●●●◖	78
⚡Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3	Ubisoft	●●●●	80
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	**Ubisoft**	●●●●◖	**68**
⚡Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Chaos Theory	**Ubisoft**	●●●●●	**92**
⚡Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow	**Ubisoft**	●●●●●	**82**
Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness	**Eidos**	●●	**72**
⚡Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	**Activision**	●●●●●	**51**
⚡Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	**Activision**	●●●●●	**63**
⚡Tony Hawk's Underground	**Activision**	●●●●●	**76**
⚡Tony Hawk's Underground 2	Activision	●●●●◖	87
Top Angler	Xicat	●●●◖	57
Top Gear Dare Devil	Kemco	●●●◖	41
Top Gun: Combat Zones	Titus	●●●	50
Total Immersion Racing	Empire	●	66
Transformers	Atari	●●●◖	81
Transworld Surf	Infogrames	●●●◖	57
⚡Tribes: Aerial Assault	Sierra	●●●◖	62
Triple Play 2002	EA Sports	●●	55
Triple Play Baseball	EA Sports	●●	45
⚡Trivial Pursuit: Unhinged	Atari	●●	81
True Crime: Streets of L.A.	**Activision**	●●	**76**
Tsugunai: Atonement	Atlus	●●●	53
Turok: Evolution	Acclaim	●◖	62
Twisted Metal: Black	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**47**
⚡Twisted Metal: Black Online	Sony CEA	●●●●	61
Ty the Tasmanian Tiger	**EA Games**	●●●	**62**
Ty the Tasmanian Tiger 2: Bush Rescue	EA Games	●●●●	88
UEFA Euro 2004	EA Sports	●●●●◖	82
UFC Throwdown	Crave	●●●◖	58
UFC Sudden Impact	Crave	●●●◖	82
Under the Skin	Capcom	●●●◖	86
Unison	Tecmo	●●●◖	44
Unlimited Saga	Square Enix	●●	70
Unreal Tournament	Infogrames	●●◖	40
Urban Reign	Namco	●●●◖	97
The Urbz: Sims in the City	EA Games	●●●◖	88
V-Rally 3	Infogrames	●●●●◖	64
Vampire Night	Namco	●●◖	52
Van Helsing	Vivendi Universal	●●●◖	82
Vexx	Acclaim	●●	67
Victorious Boxers	Empire	●●●◖	51
⚡Vietcong: Purple Haze	Global Star	●◖	88
Viewtiful Joe	Capcom	●●●●◖	85
Viewtiful Joe 2	Capcom	●●●●	88
Virtua Fighter 4	**Sega**	●●●●●	**55**
Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution	**Sega**	●●●●●	**72**
Virtua Quest	Sega	●●	89
Virtual on Marz	Sega	●●	76
Wakeboarding Unleashed	Activision	●●●●◖	70
Wallace & Gromit in Project Zoo	Bam	●●●	74
War Jetz	3DO	●●◖	48
War of the Monsters	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**64**
⚡Warhammer 40,000: Fire Warrior	THQ	●●◖	74
Warriors of Might and Magic	3DO	●●◖	44
Wave Rally	Eidos	●◖	53
Way of the Samurai	Bam	●●●◖	59
Way of the Samurai 2	Capcom	●●●	82
Wheel of Fortune	Atari	●●◖	76
Whiplash	Eidos	●●●◖	76
Whirl Tour	Vivendi Universal	●●	63
Whiteout	Konami	●	65
Wild Arms 3	Sony CEA	●●●◖	62
Wild Wild Racing	Interplay	●●●	39
Winback	Koei	●●●●	43
Wipeout Fusion	Bam	●●●●◖	57
Wizardry: Tale of the Forsaken Land	Atlus	●●●	53
Woody Woodpecker: Buzz Buzzard Park	DreamCatcher	●●●	57
⚡World Championship Poker	Crave	●◖	90
⚡World Championship Pool 2004	Jaleco	●●●◖	76

IN THE KEY OF SPRINGFIELD

As of now there's still only one *Simpsons* game worth owning: *The Simpsons: Hit & Run*, a hilarious, in-joke-filled takeoff of *Crazy Taxi*.

HEROES of the PACIFIC™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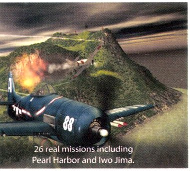
26 real missions including Pearl Harbor and Iwo Jima.

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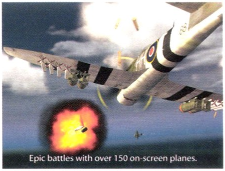
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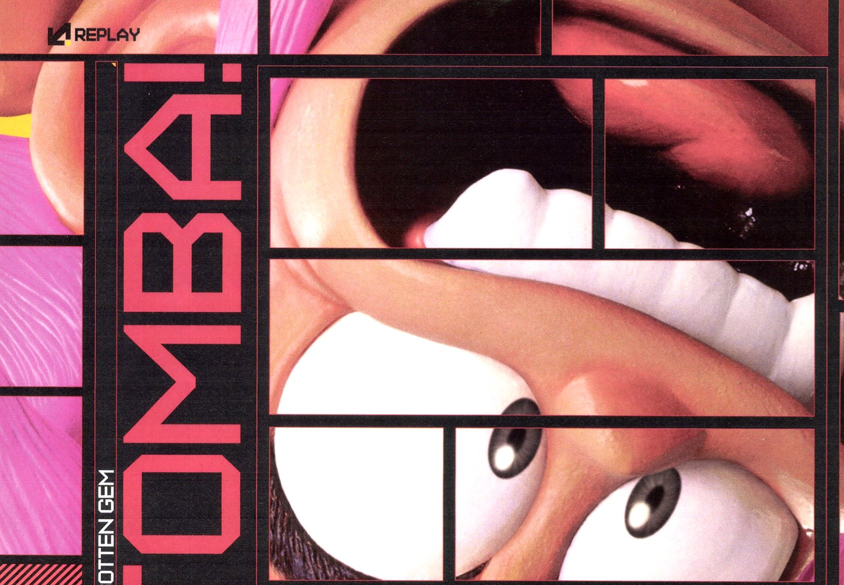


FORGOTTEN GEM

TOMBA!

WHOOPEE CAMP'S CULT CLASSIC DELIVERED PIG-BITIN' FUN FOR THE PS1 CROWD

Historically, software for a new console has always branched out as the system grows in popularity, and PlayStation software was no different. The first batch of PS1 games demonstrated the system's raw 3D prowess with the likes of *Battle Arena Toshinden* and *Ridge Racer*, while the second wave proved its potential to create triple-A blockbusters like *Resident Evil* and *Final Fantasy VII*. Once Sony's console was firmly established, developers had the freedom to stretch a little more and let their creativity take control.

It's hard to think of a more creative (or off-the-wall) game than Whoopee Camp's 1998 release *Tomba!*, but in a lot of ways that creativity is what made it so good. An odd fusion of traditional play mechanics and cutting-edge concepts, *Tomba!* and its sequel (*Tomba! 2: The Evil Swine Return*, 2000) took the 2D platformer in new, bizarre, and, fortunately, entertaining directions.

While the game's overall approach to open-ended exploration and obstacle-based progress was familiar to veterans of adventures like *Wonder Boy III* and the more recent *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night*, the specifics were unconventional to say the least. For starters, *Tomba!* featured a fairly uncommon graphical style which placed hand-drawn character sprites, limited to two-dimensional movement, in polygonal 3D worlds. Sure, *Pandemonium!* had already done it... but then, *Pandemonium!* didn't feature a pink-haired caveboy named Tomba on a quest to rescue his grandfather's pendant from a grim fate by biting pigs, now did it?

Tomba's goofy bubble-gum-headed appearance and rather unconventional approach to battling his porcine foes (even the NPCs made jokes about him) were pretty good indications of what gamers found within the game itself. While the basic action was the time-honored platformer standard (run, leap, jump on bad guys), everything was presented with a sort of manic glee that left players wondering what would happen around the next corner.

The unpredictability was heightened by the strange quest system: As Tomba conversed with game characters and explored the game world, he'd suddenly be presented with new objectives that appeared at the top of the screen like something out of *Family Feud*.

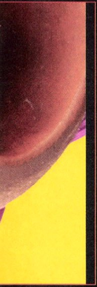
Unlike the missions in, say, *Grand Theft Auto*, Tomba's quests could overlap and would run until completed. Some were a cinch to wrap up, while others—like the mission to recover his grandfather's pendant—hovered in the background throughout huge chunks of the game. Many events were pivotal to making headway in the adventure, requiring exploration or the acquisition of new skills and equipment to complete. But just as many were purely optional, giving *Tomba!* that all-importance balance of satisfying both casual fans and obsessive completists.

IT'S HARD TO THINK OF A MORE CREATIVE GAME.

Tomba! was a critical hit and earned a loyal following among those who played it. Unfortunately, the game's sequel didn't go over quite so well. Many attribute this to the fact that *Tomba 2* toned down some of the more outrageous elements of the original—the story was less wacky, the humor less slapstick, and the quests less ridiculous and more perfunctory. Even the visuals were less unique, with the mix of sprites and polygons abandoned in favor of fully 3D characters. The result was a slightly more typical game—and given how much had been accomplished by works like *Klonoa*, this step backward made for something of a disappointment.

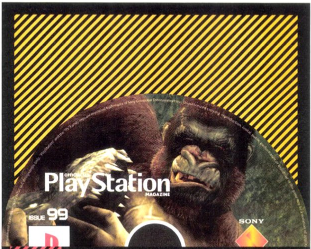
Tomba and his creator Whoopee Camp have vanished into history, but they haven't been totally forgotten. Both *Tomba!* games command respectable aftermarket prices and are highly sought after by gamers wanting to catch up with two of the most unique experiences the 32-bit generation had to offer. « *Jeremy Parish*

TIME 0'18"31
BEST 0'24"96
Charity Wings Acquired!



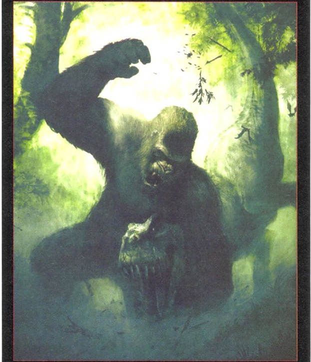
oila! There we go...
wo weapons combined in one...
his is the GrappleJack!

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
World Destruction League: Thunder Tanks	3DO	●●●	42
World of Outlaws: Sprint Cars	Infogrames	●●●●	55
World Series Baseball 2K3	Sega Sports	●●●●	67
World Soccer: Winning Eleven 6 Int'l	**Konami**	**●●●●●**	**67**
World Soccer: Winning Eleven 7 Int'l	**Konami**	**●●●●●**	**78**
⚡World Soccer: Winning Eleven 8 Int'l	Konami	●●●●◖	90
World Tour Soccer 2002	Sony CEA	●●●●	53
World Tour Soccer 2003	Sony CEA	●●●●	65
⚡World Tour Soccer 2004	Sony CEA	●●●	80
⚡World Tour Soccer 2006	Gathering	●●	91
Worms Forts: Under Siege	Sega	●●●	92
Wrath Unleashed	LucasArts	●◖	78
WRC: World Rally Championship	**Bam**	**●●●●●**	**57**
Wreckless: The Yakuza Missions	Activision	●●	63
WTA Tour Tennis	Konami	●	57
WWE Crush Hour	THQ	●●◖	68
WWE SmackDown! Here Comes the Pain	**THQ**	**●●●◖**	**76**
WWE SmackDown! Just Bring It	**THQ**	**●●●◖**	**52**
WWE SmackDown! Shut Your Mouth	**THQ**	**●●◖**	**64**
⚡WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw	THQ	●●●◖	88
X Squad	EA Games	●●●◖	38
The X-Files: Resist or Serve	Vivendi Universal	●●◖	81
X-Men Legends	Activision	●●●●	87
X-Men: Next Dimension	Activision	●●●	64
X2: Wolverine's Revenge	Activision	●●●	69
Xenosaga Episode I: DWZM	**Namco**	**●●●●**	**66**
Xenosaga Episode II: JVGUB	Namco	●●●◖	90
XGRA: Extreme-G Racing Association	Acclaim	●●●●◖	74
⚡XIII	Ubisoft	●●●◖	75
Yanya Caballista: City Skater	Koei	●●●◖	49
Ys VI: The Art of Napishtim	Konami	●●●◖	90
Yu-Gi-Oh! The Duelists of the Roses	**Konami**	**●●◖**	**67**
Yu-Gi-Oh! Capsule Monster Coliseum	Konami	●●●	88
Yu Yu Hakusho: Dark Tournament	Atari	●●◖	88
Zapper	Infogrames	●●◖	64
ZOE: Zone of the Enders	Konami	●●●●◖	44
Zone of the Enders: The 2nd Runner	Konami	●●●●◖	68



COMING NEXT MONTH

WHAT WILL DECEMBER LOOK LIKE IN OPM WORLD?



ON THE COVER

PETER JACKSON'S KING KONG

PLAYABLE DEMO!

PLUS the exclusive hands-on preview of the game based on the holiday blockbuster film.

ALSO ON THE DISC

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RATCHET: DEADLOCKED
NEED FOR SPEED: MOST WANTED
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JOURNEY OF THE CURSED KING
CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
TOTAL OVERDOSE
KARAOKE REVOLUTION PARTY
DDR EXTREME 2
SHINING FORCE NEO
BROTHERS IN ARMS: EARNED IN BLOOD

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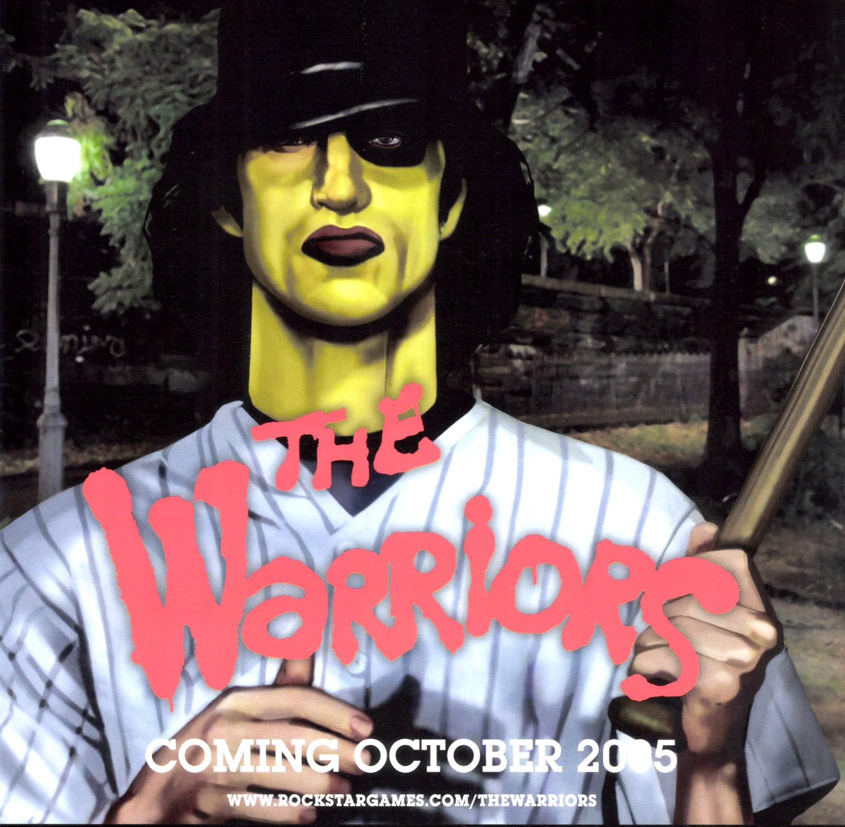
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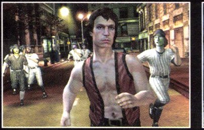

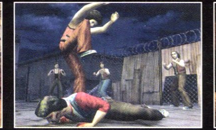

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REWIND

OPM THROUGH THE YEARS

THE SAGA CONTINUES

OPM is just two issues away from No. 100. Continuing with the theme of the last few months, we're taking a look at Issues #67 through #77. We saw a lot of great games and a lot of really awful ones. We saw a few of our colleagues go off to greener pastures. And we saw enough crappy license-exploitation games to kill a horse.

PlayStation
MIDNIGHT CLUB 2
1300 RATINGS

ISSUE #67: APRIL 2003

Cover story: *Midnight Club II*
Reviewed: *Def Jam Vendetta* (4/5), *My Street* (3/5), *Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven* (3/5)
Previewed: *Soul Calibur II, Silent Hill 3, Auto Modellista, Resident Evil: Dead Aim*
Hyperbole of the month: "[*Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*] is one of the greatest things that has ever happened to my life." —Dave Chappelle, quoted in *Stuff*

PlayStation
SPLINTER CELL
PLAY IT
EXCLUSIVE PLAYABLE DEMO INSIDE
1319 RATINGS

ISSUE #68: MAY 2003

Cover story: *Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell*
Reviewed: *Amplitude* (4/5), *Dynasty Warriors 4* (4.5/5), *ZOE: The 2nd Runner* (4.5/5)
Previewed: *Medal of Honor: Rising Sun, Enter the Matrix, Jak II*
Understatement of the month: "But is [*Enter the Matrix*] any good? We've had limited time with an early version that wasn't without its rough spots."

PlayStation
SOCOM 2
U.S. NAVY SEALS
7 GAMES THAT WILL CHANGE EVERYTHING
1338 RATINGS

ISSUE #69: JUNE 2003

Cover story: *SOCOM II: U.S. Navy SEALs*
Reviewed: *Auto Modellista* (2.5/5), *.hack//MUTATION* (4/5), *Magic Pengel: The Quest for Color* (4/5)
Previewed: *Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando, Onimusha 3, Ape Escape 2*
Most surreal moment: An "Only in Japan" piece about the *Bobobo-bo* series, whose titular protagonist fights with his *nose hair.*

PlayStation
HULK
1355 RATINGS

ISSUE #70: JULY 2003

Cover story: *Hulk*
Reviewed: *Ape Escape 2* (4.5/5), *Evil Dead: A Fistful of Boomstick* (3/5), *Hulk* (4/5)
Previewed: *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater, Castlevania: Lament of Innocence, Beyond Good & Evil, Legacy of Kain: Defiance*
Most unreasonably optimistic quote: "One of Sony's coolest presentations was *Rise to Honor*, the action game starring Jet Li."

PlayStation
59 AWESOME GAMES
NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND
1378 RATINGS

ISSUE #71: AUGUST 2003

Cover story: *Need for Speed Underground*
Reviewed: *Silent Hill 3* (4.5/5), *Enter the Matrix* (3/5), *Downhill Domination* (4/5)
Previewed: *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time, XIII, Resident Evil: Outbreak*
Most unreasonably optimistic quote: "We've heard from several sources that Sony's target [for PSP pricing] is to match the Game Boy Advance SP at $99."

PlayStation
MEDAL OF HONOR RISING SUN
1393 GAMES RATED

ISSUE #72: SEPTEMBER 2003

Cover story: *Medal of Honor: Rising Sun*
Reviewed: *Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness* (2/5), *Futurama* (2.5/5), *Soul Calibur II* (5/5), *The Simpsons: Hit & Run* (4/5)
Previewed: *Champions of Norrath, DRIV3R, True Crime: Streets of L.A.*
Oddest lawsuit: Activision files a breach-of-contract suit against Viacom for not doing enough with the *Star Trek* license.

PlayStation
SSEXY!
SEE IT PLAY IT
PSP

ISSUE #73: OCTOBER 2003

Cover story: *SSX 3*
Reviewed: *Freedom Fighters* (5/5), *.hack//OUTBREAK* (4/5), *Alter Echo* (2/5)
Previewed: *Manhunt, EyeToy: Play, Karaoke Revolution, Xenosaga Episode II: JVGUB*
Most premature ejaculation: A two-page spread on Nova, leading lady of *StarCraft: Ghost*. This was more than two years ago, and the game has yet to come out.

PlayStation
PRINCE OF PERSIA
KILL ZONE
GRAN TURISMO 4

ISSUE #74: NOVEMBER 2003

Cover story: *Prince of Persia*
Reviewed: *Jak II* (3.5/5), *Shinobi* (3.5/5), *Ratchet & Clank* (5/5), *Castlevania: Lament of Innocence* (4/5), *RPG Maker II* (3.5/5)
Previewed: *Tony Hawk's Underground, James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing*
Most unreasonably optimistic quote: "*Final Fantasy VII-2* is finally a reality!" *Advent Children* isn't quite what we had in mind.

6 PLAYABLE PS2 GAMES INSIDE!
PlayStation
Final FANTASY X-2

ISSUE #75: DECEMBER 2003

Cover story: *Final Fantasy X-2*
Reviewed: *SOCOM II* (5/5), *Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando* (5/5), *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time* (5/5)
Previewed: *Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain, Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow*
Funniest moment: Robin Wilson beats Michael Stipe on "It's the End of the World As We Know It" in *Karaoke Revolution.*

PLAYABLE: SOCOM II RISE TO HONOR & MORE!
PlayStation
THE BIG GAMES FOR 2004

ISSUE #76: JANUARY 2004

Cover story: *The Big Games for 2004*
Reviewed: *.hack//QUARANTINE* (4/5), *The Hobbit* (3.5/5), *Manhunt* (3.5/5), *Tony Hawk's Underground* (5/5), *True Crime* (2/5)
Previewed: *Killzone, Star Wars Battlefront*
Most disturbing appearance of Osama bin Laden: Mr. Re's rap video extra on the abominable *Fugitive Hunter*. "Been looking for you / On the PS2." Uh, yeah.

PlayStation
SYPHON FILTER THE OMEGA STRAIN
EXCLUSIVE PLAYABLE DEMO & ONLINE DETAILS
SONIC HEROES

ISSUE #77: FEBRUARY 2004

Cover story: *Syphon Filter: Omega Strain*
Reviewed: *Fatal Frame II: Crimson Butterfly* (4/5), *Maximo vs. Army of Zin* (4/5)
Previewed: *Silent Hill 4: The Room, The Nightmare Before Christmas, The Suffering*
Best advice: "Do what excites you. Don't do something just because you think it's what publishers want or the market wants." —*Prince of Persia* creator Jordan Mechner

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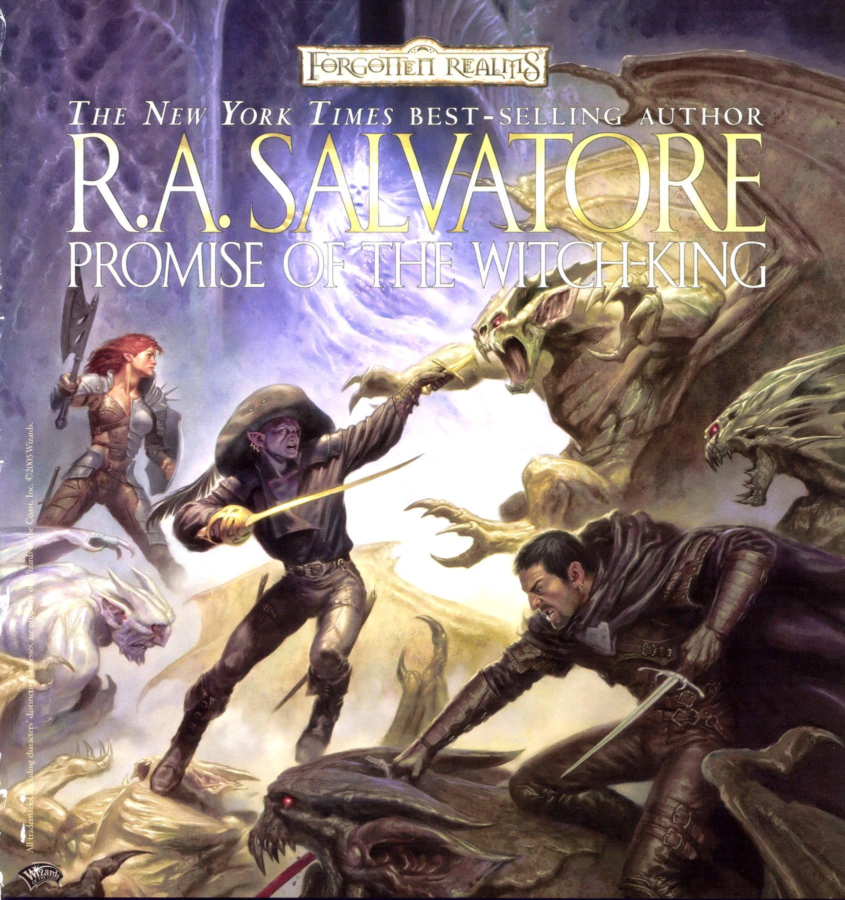

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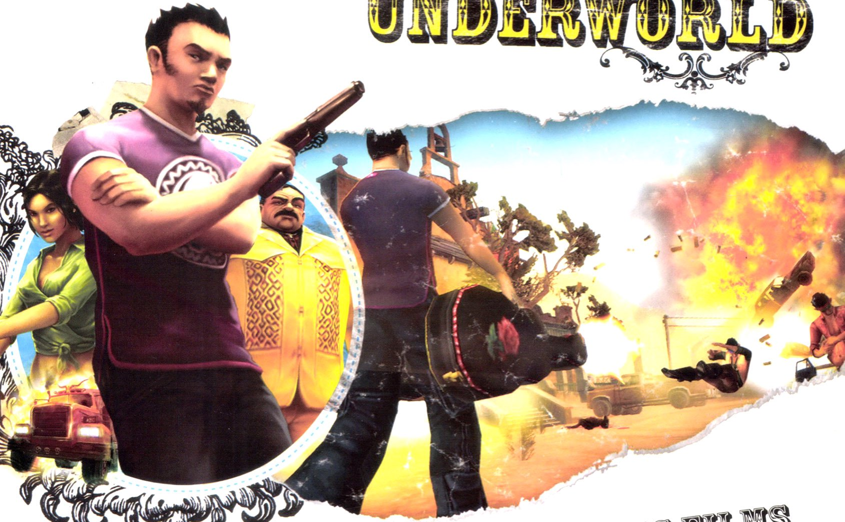

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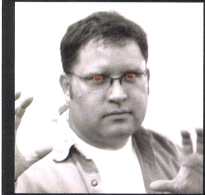
FOR GREAT PS2 AND PSP GAMES



As I write this, the Tokyo Game Show, Japan's version of E3, is two weeks away. No doubt by the time you read this, the news has spread fast and far about how awesome the PS3 really is, which is reported to be playable at the show.

I don't know about you, but as excited as I am about the PS3, I'm sort of glad it's still another year or more off. In the last month I've played *The Hulk: Ultimate Destruction, MediEvil: Resurrection,* and *Spartan: Total Warrior*—and had a ball doing it. This holiday, I'm looking forward to *Shadow of the Colossus, Soul Calibur III, The Warriors, Prince of Persia 3, Kingdom Hearts II,* and *GTA: Liberty City Stories.* The first half of 2006 will bring us such potential gems as *Tomb Raider: Legend, Black, Scarface,* and *The Godfather.*

After five great years, the PS2 still has a lot of life, and the PSP has barely scratched the surface. Let's not let the premature next-gen hype distract us from the bounty we already have. « *Tom Byron*

THE OPM FAMILY

MISSION STATEMENT

Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine is America's No. 1 authority on all things PlayStation. *OPM*'s expert editors and writers are the best in the business, presenting the most important PlayStation news, previews, and reviews in a professional, enthusiastic, and honest manner, and our in-depth features and interviews are second to none. While *OPM* editorial is completely independent of Sony, the magazine's "official" status allows it to include the exclusive monthly DVD packed with playable demos and videos of the hottest PlayStation games around. *OPM* provides its readers with a fun, informative—and beautifully designed—package each and every month, because, after all, fun is what PlayStation gaming is all about.

DANA JONGEWAARD

feels gluttonous, and it has nothing to do with the bowls of Halloween candy she's been scarfing down. After all, with awesome games to review (like *Burnout Revenge, Sly 3,* and *We Love Katamari*), who wouldn't feel self-indulgent?

JOE RYBICKI

would like to offer a public service announcement to all *Burnout Legends* players: Playing the game while hurtling at ridiculous speeds down the highway may sound like an exciting, immersive experience. And it is.

THIERRY NGUYEN

has recently joined the "getting hitched club." He's has already made his wife roll her eyes at him by throwing his wedding ring into a fire in order to see if any secret prophecies or poems were inscribed on it. There weren't.

GIANCARLO VARANINI

is frightened by some of the characters created by other staff members using *Soul Calibur III*'s create a character mode, but none is worse than Alejandro's character, whose name was so bad we couldn't print it in the magazine.

LOGAN PARR

loves the fact that Halloween will soon be upon us. Because he's a big fan of horror-themed games, this is the best time of year for him! Of course, playing these sorts of games has an unusual effect on him.... Hmmm, looking a little pale lately, are we?

RYAN VULK

is so very tired that he has forgotten what a good night's sleep feels like. He does know, however, that the *OPM* staff is one of the best groups of friends he has ever worked with, and he tips his hat to them. GG team, and hoo-freaking-rah!!!

ALEJANDRO CHAVETTA

is celebrating the upcoming election season by deciding to run for president in 2008. He does not have any experience other than what he has acquired at *OPM.* He's under the impression that his future (and yours) is now up to you.

BOBO
Hideo Kojima

ROBERT ASHLEY

is the Walrus. Or rather, he's half of Walrus, his band that has just emerged from the recording studio and is wowing Bay Area denizens with its musical talents. To check it out for yourself, visit www.myspace.com/walrusden.

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house cat

8 EXCLUSIVE PLAYABLE PS2 DEMOS
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SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS
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LETTER OF THE MONTH

My name is Adam Jones, like the football player for the Titans. He has the nickname "Pac-man." I have a nickname too: It's "Housecat." He's more athletic, but I am better looking. I was wondering if since I have the same name as an NFL player, does that mean I can get a free copy of *Madden 06*? One more thing: Adam Jones went to West Virginia and my mother's name is Virginia. I don't know how tall or how much Jones weighs, but I am six feet and 197 pounds. I love the NFL and know every coach's name.

Adam "Housecat" Jones
Anniston, Alabama

While we'll admit to feeling a cold chill after reading your letter, we're pretty sure these are just coincidences, so no, it doesn't mean you can get a free copy of *Madden*. Interesting note: EIC Tom Byron shares a name with a celebrity too, but we don't even want to go there.

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THOSE WERE THE GOOD OLD DAYS

I read your article on PlayStation's 10-year birthday, and it got me a little teary-eyed reminiscing. It was the winter of '98 when my dad first hinted at getting us a game console for Christmas—a Nintendo 64. At the time I had wanted one, but looking back now it's a good thing he had already purchased a PlayStation and wasn't really serious about the N64. When we opened it on Christmas morning we were excited at the sight of this new toy, and the excitement stayed strong through the hour and a half it took my dad to set it up, and the extra 10 minutes he spent test-playing *Spyro* to see if it worked. Along with the console we got a few other games: *Crash Bandicoot 3*, *Gran Turismo*, and *Metal Gear Solid*, a pretty good starting point. I still remember my mom hiding *MGS* because it was too mature for us, and then how I secretly played it at night so she wouldn't catch us. My PlayStation has really had a massive effect on my life, through the good and bad that little gray box was always there, and even though I've since moved on to a PS2 I still have fun replaying the old games. I mean, without the PlayStation giving me something to do, I could've been riding a horse and listening to crappy country music instead of spending hours obsessing over every last subquest in *FFVI*—and just the thought of that makes me cringe.

Bryn Vilness
Tompkins, Saskatchewan

Us too!

GAMERS ARE TALKING ABOUT

STRAIGHT FROM THE OPM MESSAGE BOARDS

THE AUTUMN THAW

"What are your impressions of *Tony Hawk's American Wasteland?*" asked **flashadams**. "At first I was bummed. I thought it was going to be a history lesson about Tony Hawk's life. Actually, that sounded cool, but I wanted to play as myself. I've been making myself a custom skater in that game series since *THPS2*. Anyway, I think it looks like it's going to be great."

"I lost interest in the *THPS* games," said **ohJTBehaaave**. "They are getting stale of late. If you have an older version, it still gets the job done."

PSPMagnet agreed, saying, "I feel like they are doing little to change the game. A couple new tricks and a big open city really don't entice me to purchase another *Tony Hawk* game. When they finally figure out some things the franchise might be missing, then maybe I'll buy another one."

Then old-schooler **arsenalgear4079** chimed in on the soundtrack: "I was actually pretty interested until I found out that all the awesome '80s punk wasn't really going to be awesome '80s punk—it was gonna be sh***y pop-emo bands covering '80s punk songs."

PROPHECY FULFILLED

The word is finally starting to spread about *Indigo Prophecy*.

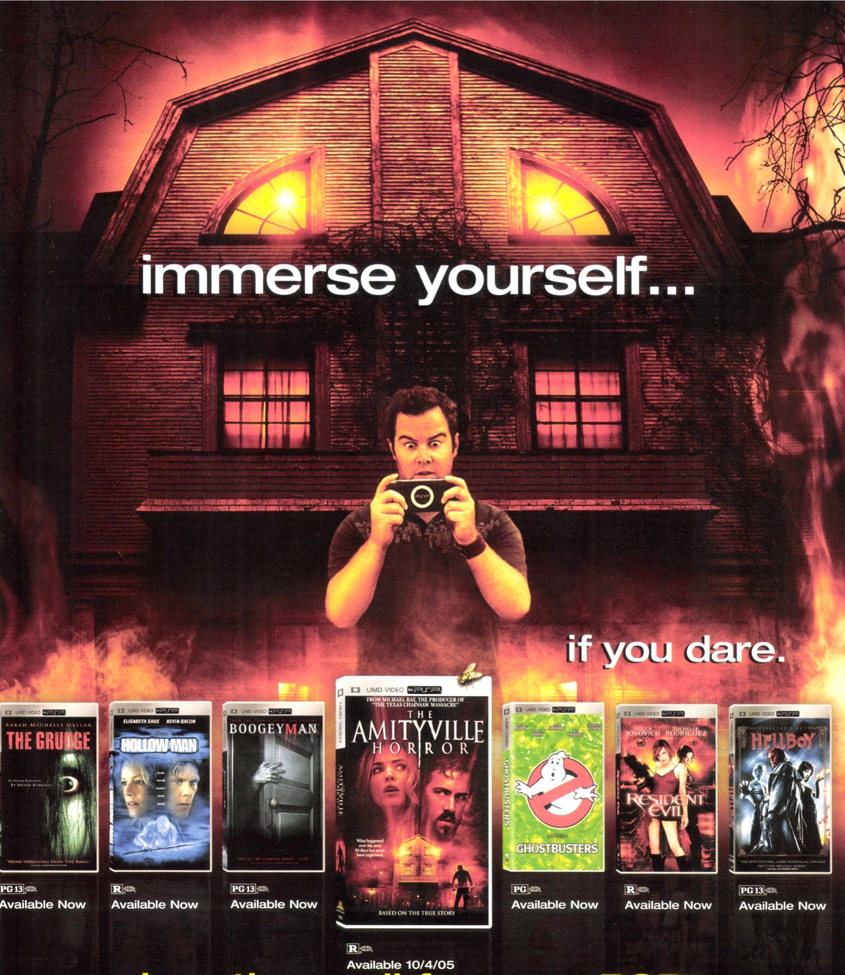
"You really do control the story in this game," said **Evil_Mego**. "It's awesome. The best thing about it was that it reminded me a lot of *Shadow of Destiny*, and that is a VERY good thing."

"I've had my eye on it for a while," **chirs3** admitted to all and sundry. "I'm not sold yet, but I'm definitely interested. Who knows? It could be this year's *Beyond Good & Evil*."

"It's a really interesting game," concurred **DatMonkey**. "Apparently, you can switch between the murderer and other characters in the story. Overall, this really got my interest."

"I'm just happy to see a company doing something DIFFERENT!!" chimed in longtime poster **ohJTBehaaave**. "Yeah, I know it's not the first of its kind, but it gets high marks for going off the beaten path and being interesting when 90 percent of companies are doing cookie-cutter games."

But enough about you, let's talk about us: Want to know what we thought of the game? Turn to page 108.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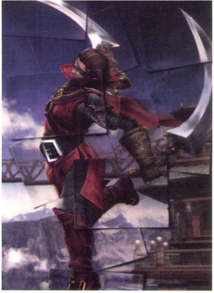

PlayStation
BURNOUT REVENGE
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SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS
8 ASTOUNDING PLAYABLES!
RP-M

SEPARATED AT BIRTH

As I was reading *OPM* Issue #97, I noticed something in the ad for *Soul Calibur III*. One of the characters looks a lot like Auron from *Final Fantasy X* and I was just wondering if they could do that?
Via e-mail

As with Housecat, we think you're just noticing a coincidence, but an interesting one nonetheless. That image is not of an actual character in *Soul Calibur III*, but one made with the game's character creator. We're sure Namco's inspiration came from many sources. (Oh, and check out Giancarlo's five out of five review on page 80.)

WE'RE ON THE CASE

I love your mag. It's great! Recently I noticed on 1UP.com that you guys were going to have plastic demo-disc cases! Hurrah! Finally my disc may not be scratched, or even a little bent. I received the September and October issues, but my demo disc came in the regular paper sleeve, not the plastic case—just the same old, same old.
Aman "Seifer" Boparai
Via e-mail

We're glad you like the new slim-case for the disc, but we do need to clarify that we are only TEST MARKETING the new look in Barnes & Noble stores with the September, October, November, and December issues. If people like it, then we'll decide if it's worth doing it every issue for everyone. We'll keep you posted.

BUZZ KILL

OK, I know you guys write for a PlayStation-specific magazine, and doing so requires you to enjoy everything PlayStation related. But there is something I must point out that was clouded by your love for PlayStation. In "PS2 Five Years Later" (Issue #97) you say, "There's speculation that Sony overstated the PS2's power in order to steal thunder away from Sega's Dreamcast." Are you serious? There's "speculation"? Sony blatantly overglorified the PS2 to increase hype and drive up sales! Furthermore, I'm sorry to be the bearer of bad news, but it seems they have done it again with the PlayStation 3. Why, you ask? Because it works on gullible people like you! There aren't and never will be graphics as good as the *Killzone* trailer on the PS3. So please just take a step back and realize the PlayStation 2 (and 3) are great, but they aren't godlike. Keep this in mind for future PS3 articles please! We don't need Sony's lies getting spread around like they did during their last launch.
Misterradtastic
via e-mail

BE A PARENT

I am writing you in regard to all the hype about violence and sex in videogames. All of these politicians and parents (I use the term loosely) want to blame the videogame industry for how their children are behaving. I think they need to shut up and take a look at how they are raising their own children. Look at Senator Clinton's children, for example. If I am not mistaken, they where busted for underage drinking a couple of times. Where were Hilary and Bill? Oh yeah, they were out protecting everyone else's children and not paying enough attention to their own. I am a 34-year-old male who is happily married with three boys (ages 4, 8, and 12). I spend most of my free time with them. We play games, but for a limited time. They won't even think about playing a game that is not rated for them. I have talked to them on numerous occasions about games and content. They won't even watch me play an M-rated game. All it takes is a little time and effort on the parents' part and their children will be just fine. Be interactive. Be responsible. Be a parent.
Shawn Dunn
Green Bay, WI

Thanks for the timely and provocative words, Shawn. Quick note: The Clintons have only one child, daughter Chelsea. You may be thinking of someone else. «

SURVEY TIME!

Tell us what you think of your favorite PlayStation mag in the 2005 *Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine* Editorial Study. It'll take only a few minutes, and upon completion you'll be eligible to win a $300 American Express Check, redeemable practically anywhere. Just go to gamersvoice.1UP.com and survey away.

CORRECTION

Do we really need to point out that it's *Shadow of the Colossus* and not *Shadow of the Colossusv*? We do? Geez, you people don't let us get away with anything.

ASK US ANYTHING

AND WE'LL ANSWER

PRINCE OF PRINCES

Q In your September coverage of fall games you mentioned that in *Prince of Persia 3* the story involves Kaileena from *Warrior Within*. When I finished the game, Kaileena died and the Prince sailed for Babylon alone. Why is she in the sequel?
Matthew Dykstra
via e-mail

A Because you didn't get the best ending. Want to try it again?

POTTY MOUTH

Q That "edited" demo of *The Suffering: Ties That Bind* has a little problem. At the end, one of the cops says, "Holy f***ing evil s***", and it's completely uncensored. I really don't care that it was unedited, but I thought you might find it interesting.
Zarradeth
via e-mail

A WON'T SOMEONE THINK OF THE CHILDREN?!

ECONOMICS 101

Q Maybe I am an idiot, but if the PS3 costs $500 to make and it sells for $400, how are they going to make money off of it?
Susan Halperin
via e-mail

A It's called a "loss leader." A product is sold for less than it costs to make because the company can make a bigger profit off of things that use that product. In this case it's the games themselves, which earn Sony a licensing fee. Ever gotten a free razor in the mail? Same concept: The razor isn't free to make, but the manufacturer makes bank on razor blades.

GREETINGS, PROGRAM

Q Any word of a *Tron*-based world in *Kingdom Hearts 2*?
Marc Sakol
via e-mail

A Nope, but that would totally rock. Seriously, that would be the awesomest.

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BLOG OF THE MONTH

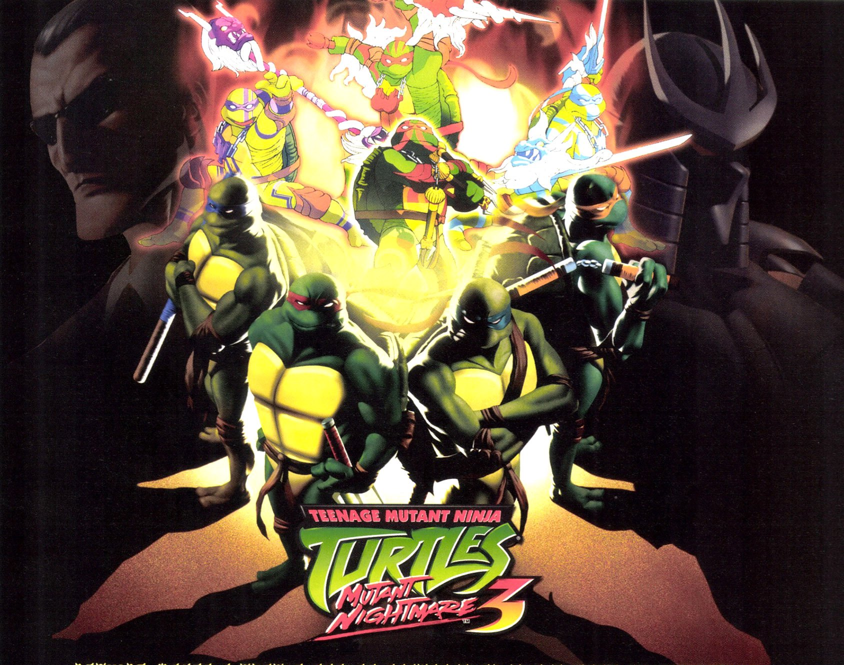
"It's been predicted for years now that if a Category 5 hurricane were to hit New Orleans, the city would be lost. My mother always warned me about the 'killer storm' that would destroy the city one day. I always just blew her off and said that could never happen in this day and age because we have technology to protect us. The government wouldn't let New Orleans be lost so easily.

"On August 29, 2005, the United States Gulf Coast was devastated (for the gamers out there, "pwned") by Hurricane Katrina, a Category 5 hurricane. I lost not only my home and possessions, but also the city I grew up in. My dad was one of the ones at the Superdome, and I haven't heard from him since we left. I am extremely worried.

"I am one of the refugees who escaped from the city before the storm hit, and I have to say that I am extremely blessed to have family that truly cares about me."
Duwayne Steward
black_dragon_legend.1UP.com

CLUB OF THE MONTH

Raising money for the Red Cross in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.
Red Cross Art Auction
artauction-club.1UP.com



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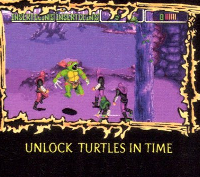

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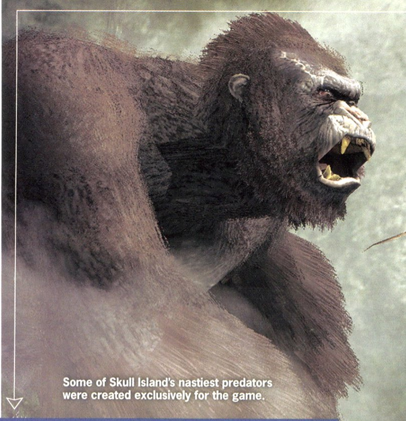
LOOK INTO THE EYES OF THE

THINK YOU KNOW KONG? THINK AGAIN.

BREATHING HEAVILY, YOU CROUCH IN A DENSE THICKET OF JUNGLE VINES. Twenty yards away, a hungry Tyrannosaur rages through the trees, hunting for his dinner. Fear pierces your gut as you realize your trusty weapon is empty. Suddenly, an impossibly huge ape bodyslams the T-Rex, sending it sprawling. And a titanic struggle erupts before your eyes. Welcome to Skull Island – and the unforgettable world of Peter Jackson's King Kong.

ADVERTISEMENT

KING KONG FIRST MADE HIS CINEMATIC DEBUT in 1933, thrilling audiences with a powerful story and groundbreaking special effects for its time. Peter Jackson's current reimagining promises to do no less, bringing the perilous world of Skull Island to life as only Jackson can – Jackson and famed game designer Michel Ancel, that is.



Some of Skull Island's nastiest predators were created exclusively for the game.

> "[Ancel] has just a great storytelling skill in making you so involved in the game as a player that you actually become emotionally attached to the characters that you're playing with." – Peter Jackson.

+ + + + + + + +

AN AVID GAMER, PETER JACKSON STARTED DREAMING UP IDEAS for a King Kong video game as soon as he started the movie. But to make a video game as memorable as the movie, he needed a creative partner with a true talent for rendering both fantasy and emotion. Then he played Beyond Good & Evil™, an epic adventure crafted by renowned game designer Michel Ancel. Right away, Jackson knew he'd found his man. And, judging by the jaw-dropping beauty and intensity of the gameplay, Jackson and Ancel have succeeded brilliantly.

BREATHING LIFE INTO A LEGEND

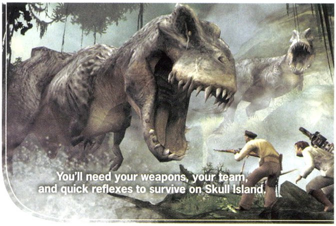
Jackson and Ancel set out to create a game deeper and more immersive than the film itself. So the game had to look and feel just as convincing as the "real" world captured on film. To achieve this, the development team used every trick in the book – plus a few that aren't.

A rare technique called "inverse kinematics" adds frightening realism to the behavior of Skull Island's predators. This technique varies and synchronizes the animations used for each type of creature, depending on the creature's AI. For example, if you're detected by a T-Rex, you'll see the monster turn its eyes and head directly toward you, lunging over rocks and smashing through the jungle in a convincing attempt to make you its dinner.

But techniques like inverse kinematics would mean little without a sophisticated AI system governing the behavior of Skull Island's denizens. Some species attack alone, while others use clever pursuit tactics to attack in groups. Fortunately, your enemies aren't the only intelligent creatures on Skull Island. Your crew will protect you, suggest solutions to problems, and generally react as real humans – real *scared* humans – would.

And just wait till you feast your eyes on the stunningly detailed jungle of Skull Island. Thanks to clever layering of the largest number of 2D sprites, filters, and effects ever used in any video game – including meteorological effects like water, fog, wind, fire, and smoke – you'll almost be able to feel the hot, humid jungle air. Blades of grass rustle convincingly around your legs. Sunlight patterns shift subtly. In short, this jungle doesn't just look pretty. It feels alive.

Perhaps the greatest creation of all is Kong himself. Agile and powerful, Kong moves through Skull Island with remarkable force and speed. And take a close look at his fur; the dev team used intricate 3D effects to actually animate each separate strand. The overall effect is breathtakingly real.



You'll need your weapons, your team, and quick reflexes to survive on Skull Island.

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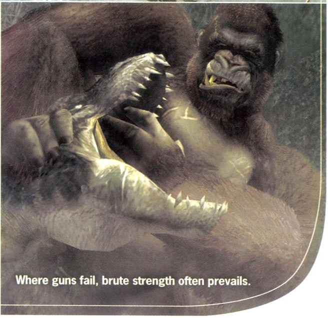
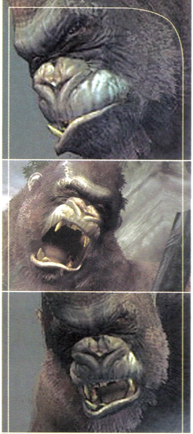

Where guns fail, brute strength often prevails.



A MASSIVE STEP FORWARD: INNOVATIONS IN IMMERSION

Every technical decision for Peter Jackson's King Kong has been made with an eye to thoroughly immersing the player in the world of the game. For example, you can still move and look around while scripted plot events occur, unlike nearly all other games. And the absence of a heads-up display makes the action feel more immediate. For example, when your character suffers an injury, you won't see any shrinking "health bar." Instead, your vision will blur and turn red.

The game also offers new experiences that don't appear in the movie. In addition to movie creatures, Jackson added beasts not seen in the film. Multiple pathways offer you a different experience every time you play, so that you'll never have to play the same game twice. The difficulty level scales fluidly according to your performance, growing more challenging as you improve.

Most impressive of all is the range of emotions evoked by the alternating gameplay possibilities. By inviting you to play as both Jack Driscoll and Kong himself, the game delivers an unforgettable mix of intensity, realism, and entertainment through a rare combination of first- and third-person play.

PLAYING WITH POWER: HEROES GREAT AND SMALL

Conceived by Jackson and realized to phenomenal effect by the development team, the dual gameplay between Jack and Kong delivers a dramatic shift in perspective and power.

As Jack Driscoll, you're outnumbered and overpowered by predators bigger, stronger, and faster than you. To heighten the sense of fear and danger, you play Jack's role in first-person. You'll have to advance through a dense jungle, never knowing what lurks behind the next tree. Armed only with the weapons you can carry, you'll never win just by fighting. To stay alive, you'll need other strategies, such as tricking predators into battling each other and using the environment to set clever traps.

At a key moment, you begin playing Kong in third-person. When the camera pulls back to reveal Kong's mighty perspective, you feel a rush of freedom and power. Delivered from the harried perspective of Jack, you inherit swift movements, powerful battle attacks, and the gratifying ability to smash, throw, and scale just about everything around you. But playing as Kong isn't just a walk in the park. Confronted by multiple enemies with clever attack patterns, you'll have to fight hard to defeat huge T-Rexes and outsmart swarms of smaller predators.

The alternating gameplay intensifies the emotions already inherent in the story. Ancel, like Jackson, never loses sight of his audience, meting out new challenges just when you want them the most. The result is nothing short of an unforgettable game experience. ■

PETER JACKSON'S
KING KONG

XBOX

XBOX 360

PlayStation 2

RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Visit www.esrb.org for updated rating information.

UBISOFT

HYPE

PREVIEWS AND NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF PLAYSTATION

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XSEEDING EXPECTATIONS

LIFE AFTER THE SQUARE ENIX EMPIRE

You may not know his name, but Jun Iwasaki is a pretty big figure in the North American videogame landscape. *Final Fantasy VII*, *Final Fantasy Tactics*, and other blockbusters (about 30 titles with over 60 million units sold all told) in Square Enix's arsenal were brought to North America under his tenure as CEO of Square Enix USA from 1995 to 2004. But even the security of the *Final Fantasy* and *Dragon Warrior* games were not enough to keep Iwasaki from leaving Square Enix in August of 2004 to form his own company called XSeed Games (he was accompanied by members of Square Enix USA's marketing, sales, business development, and public relations teams).

With so many publishers and developers either consolidating or dropping out of the picture, now may not seem like the most opportune time to start a new company in the gaming industry, but Iwasaki seems confident that the Japanese market will make it a profitable venture. XSeed plans to help companies that have RPGs that are popular in other countries successfully bring their games to the United States. "We are currently focusing on Japanese titles—while large developers and companies are looking to branch out to territories outside of Japan, many small and midrange companies in Japan are looking at bringing their titles to the States," says Iwasaki. "Some of these titles have yet to be introduced to the U.S., and that is where our knowledge and expertise come into play."

XSeed will also adopt a strategy that Majesco has used in recent years—one in which a publisher sits back and looks at public reaction to a game and then makes moves accordingly. "In addition to [bringing over] profitable titles, it is very important that we first understand the game and are able to communicate through our sales force the awareness and understanding that it is not just 'another game,'" says Iwasaki. "For a publisher like ourselves where we are not tied in with developers, it is important that we have that eye to see which titles are of higher quality than others."

XSeed is fixing that eye squarely on RPGs, a market Square Enix has dominated since the NES era, being one of the few companies that has figured out how to make RPGs consistently successful. XSeed has already made some significant acquisitions: Its first two games will be *Wild Arms 4* and *Shadow Hearts: From the New World*, sequels to two fairly well-known RPGs (see previews, page 51). Still, there can be an inherent difficulty in trying to push RPG sequels. "It is definitely a challenge to sell more units of a sequel to an existing title/series, but as long as there are new elements in the latest installment, it is possible to capture newcomers to the title," Iwasaki says.

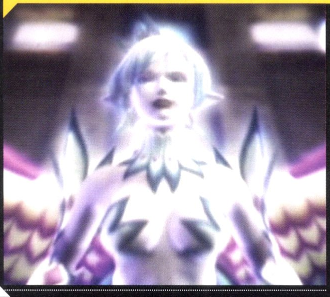
THERE CAN BE AN INHERENT DIFFICULTY IN PUSHING SEQUELS.

He continues, "What is most important to us is to introduce titles that haven't had that moment to shine and to bring out as many of those titles as possible to the U.S. market. Of course, you can't go wrong when you have titles that you know are going to sell in the millions, but what's more appealing to us at this time is to seek out the potential and maximum opportunity of a single title and maximize sales."

As for taking on other genres, Iwasaki believes that RPGs will always be XSeed's focus, but that won't stop them from looking at other games. "We consider ourselves most knowledgeable about RPGs, but we won't limit ourselves from taking a look at other games, especially story-driven games," Iwasaki explains. «

MAJESCO'S GROWTH

If you think it's impossible for a relatively small company to gain any ground in the videogame industry, think again. Majesco achieved record growth in the past year—it saw a 21 percent increase in revenue in the fiscal year ending in April 2005 over the same period in 2004.



PROMOTING THE PROBLEM

Shadow Hearts: Covenant serves as an example of what can go wrong with a good RPG. While Midway isn't entirely to blame, *Shadow Hearts* received a relatively small marketing push despite some fairly positive reviews, including a four out of five review score from *OPM*. XSeed is betting it could handle circumstances like this a little better than a publisher that doesn't have as much experience with RPGs.

HOW BIG ARE RPGS?

The *Final Fantasy* series has been good for the PlayStation and PlayStation 2. *Final Fantasy VII* was the first million-seller on the original PlayStation, while *Final Fantasy X* was the first PlayStation 2 game to sell over 4 million copies—yes, even before *Madden*. Even its sequel, *Final Fantasy X-2*, broke the million-seller mark despite the fact that it wasn't a traditional *Final Fantasy* game. Also, after its release, Square Enix's *Kingdom Hearts* kept pace right behind *Madden* on the sales charts.

IWASAKI'S RESUME

Jun Iwasaki saw quite a bit during his reign at Square Enix. He watched the company's relationship with Nintendo go south while its relationship with Sony improved tremendously, he witnessed the Square Enix merger, and then he saw the reuniting of Square Enix with Nintendo. These are just some of the games released under his reign as CEO of Square Enix USA:

Super Mario RPG: Legend of the Seven Stars (SNES)
Final Fantasy VII (PS1)
Bushido Blade (PS1)
Final Fantasy Tactics (PS1)
Einhander (PS1)
Xenogears (PS1)
Chrono Cross (PS1)
Final Fantasy VIII (PS1)
Final Fantasy IX (PS1)
Final Fantasy Origins (PS1)
Final Fantasy X (PS2)
Kingdom Hearts (PS2)
Final Fantasy XI (PS2)

GET READY TO JAM AGAIN

Electronic Arts and Def Jam are tag-teaming once again to make another title in the *Def Jam* fighting series. Tentatively called *Def Jam 3*, the next game will feature many of the elements from the two previous games, blending hip-hop culture with fighting-game mechanics, and it will be released for the PlayStation 3. The game is in development at EA's Chicago studio, not Aki, the Japanese development company responsible for the two previous games, so the announcement may come as a disappointment for those looking forward to yet another great fighting game from that studio. «

POLY
DIG
CASIO CASIO

GRAN TURISMO 5 IN 2007

If Polyphony Digital President Kazunori Yamauchi has his way, *Gran Turismo 5* will be hitting the PlayStation 3 sometime in 2007. He also claims that the game will be at least 100 times more detailed than *Gran Turismo 4*, which is pretty big talk since even the *Vision Gran Turismo* video shown at E3 didn't look substantially better than anything that's already being done in *Gran Turismo 4*. Plus, there's the whole issue of delays, something Polyphony is pretty well known for, but if delays mean we finally get a *Gran Turismo* with online play, then, quite frankly, we're all for them. «

THE WATCHDOG

COFFEE AND LESSONS

JOHN SCALZI is our man keeping an eye on things for the benefit of all gamers. You can see more of his thoughts at www.scalzi.com.

Earlier this summer, controversy erupted around Rockstar Games' *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* when a few people (including Sen. Hillary Clinton) found out that with the right mod, one could unlock in the PC version of the game the now-notorious Hot Coffee minigame, in which game character CJ can be seen having hot and nasty Skinemax-like sex with an in-game hottie. Rockstar Games rather vehemently implied that it had nothing to do with the Hot Coffee scenes, suggesting that the problem was somebody else's mod, until someone posted the codes to unlock the scene in the PS2 version of the game, meaning—surprise!—the game had Hot Coffee on tap all along.

Politicians screamed, Rockstar pulled the game, an entire industry was embarrassed, and some fine opportunists went to court, howling about how they and the children were irrevocably damaged by this horrible, horrible game. Yes, a fine time was had by all. But did any of us *learn* anything? Just in case we didn't, here are three things I suggest we *do*, for the next time:

1. **Clean up your code.** No, Hot Coffee is not in the game proper; you had to contort yourself silly to unlock it. Surprise! People will make the effort. When Hot Coffee first splashed into the news, I was astounded that Rockstar would have left it in at all. Now I get that people assumed that as long as it was hidden well away and not meant to be played at all (i.e., not an Easter egg), you could just leave the code in. Clearly, people should not make that assumption, particularly when the scene or minigame in question is at odds with one's intended ESRB rating.

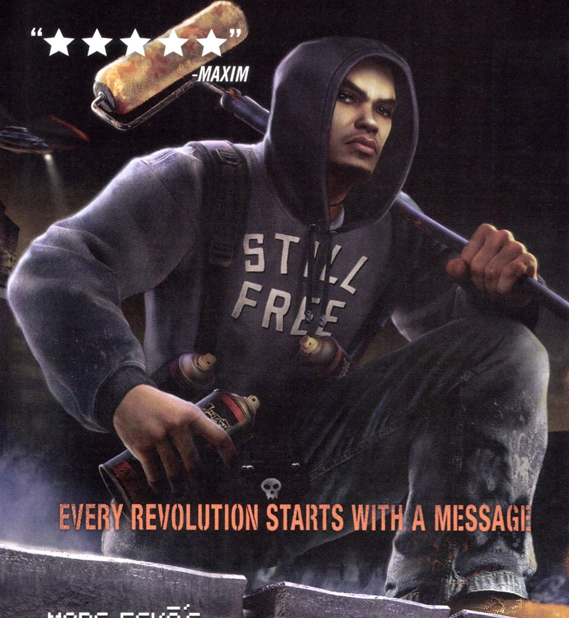
CHILDREN WERE IRREVOCABLY DAMAGED BY THIS GAME.

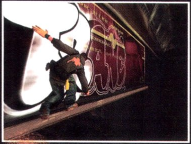
2. **For God's sake, don't dissemble.** Rockstar initially appeared to deny that the Hot Coffee scene was whipped up in-house, so when it turned out that is was, Rockstar not only looked like a bunch of asses, it also walked the entire videogame industry right into the hands of the histrionic morality police who want to suggest that videogame makers are just a step above the folks who give middle-school kids free samples of meth. What Rockstar should have done was simply state that it was looking into the issue, and then it should have admitted the code was its own and forthrightly explained why it was there in the first place.

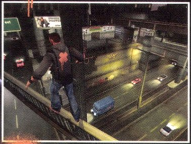
3. **Pay attention, damn it.** In July, Rockstar was sued for deceptive practices by 85-year-old Florence Cohen, who bought *San Andreas* for her 14-year-old grandson. I'm not so good with math, but I'm pretty sure that 14 is less than 17, which is the suggested age for players of M-rated games, which is what *San Andreas* was before the Hot Coffee controversy.

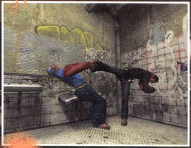
So it's not all on Rockstar or the game industry. Rockstar deserves its share of lumps, sure, but at the end of the day, both Rockstar and the ESRB made it clear the game wasn't for kids and was never intended for kids. In the real world, kids are playing M-rated games, but they're doing it at home. Rockstar and the ESRB aren't there, but the parents and other responsible adults should be. As I've said before: It's not too much to ask people buying videogames to actually *look* at the box before they buy. «

"★★★★★"
-MAXIM




Tag Anytime & Anywhere


Death-Defying Urban Acrobatics


Deadly Fighting & Vicious Attacks

EVERY REVOLUTION STARTS WITH A MESSAGE

MARC ECKŌ'S

getting up

CONTENTS UNDER PRESSURE

MARC ECKŌ PRESENTS GETTING UP: CONTENTS UNDER PRESSURE

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XBOX

PlayStation 2

PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

ATARI

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SONY
PLAYSTATION 3
SELECT
START
SONY

RISKY BUSINESS

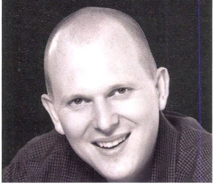
WILL SONY FOLLOW SUIT?

Microsoft is taking a big risk by selling two different versions of the 360 hardware. Is the market ready for it? Sony doesn't seem to think so, but it has the luxury of sitting back and seeing if Microsoft's strategy works. If it does, Sony still might be hesitant to follow suit, but it will undoubtedly make the company think twice about releasing a more affordable PS3 at launch.

PS3 WATCH

THE LATEST ON MULTIPLE SKUS AND ONLINE PLAY

The Game Developers Conference Europe proved to be a focal point of PlayStation 3 discussions thanks to Sony Computer Entertainment Vice President Phil Harrison, who revealed a broad range of information, ranging from online play to the multiple-SKU strategy that Microsoft has chosen to use with the Xbox 360.



HARRISON ON PS3 ONLINE

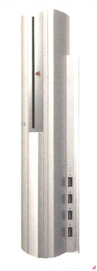
As we suspected months ago in our interview with Epic's Mark Rein, it looks like Sony will in fact go with an open architecture for its online model. What does that mean, exactly? Basically, the way that the PlayStation 2's online model operates will be applied to the PlayStation 3. While Harrison admitted that the Xbox Live online gaming service is one of the things that Microsoft has done well, he said that Sony's plan is to let publishers establish their own means for getting consumers online and to let the publishers interact with consumers directly instead of using Sony as some kind of buffer for the online experience.

Unfortunately, by going with this model, Sony runs the risk of repeating its mistakes. The PS2 online model has proven to work with some sports games, a few shooters like *SOCOM*, and *Final Fantasy XI*, but outside of those, very few PS2 games have found success online. If Sony does a better job of promoting the online experience with the PlayStation 3 and at least attempts to have some sort of unifying structure, then this may not be the case. As it stands, Sony must have a decent plan in place if it hopes to make this model a success.

THE MULTIPLE-SKU SCENARIO

Microsoft announced that it plans to sell two versions of the Xbox 360 when it launches the system in November. One version, called the Xbox 360 core system, will include the console, a standard controller, a faceplate, a Silver membership to Xbox Live (which doesn't actually let you play Xbox 360 games online), and a standard AV cable. The other Xbox 360 package adds a hard drive, a wireless controller, an Xbox Live headset, and a media remote—and all of this costs only $100 more.

There has already been a massive outcry from the Xbox community on Microsoft's strategy, saying that it will segment the market much in the same way Sega did when it offered upgrades to its systems. "While we designed a no-compromises game system,



KILLZONE

TO THE RESCUE
The original *Killzone* has some pretty decent online multiplayer gameplay, but you really wouldn't know it since Sony hasn't done a particularly good job of pushing online play for its games or for the PlayStation 2 in general. Hopefully, the company has learned its lesson and will kick off the PS3's online features the way it was meant to be done—with potentially great games like the next *Killzone* and *Unreal Tournament 2007*. But only time will tell if the open-structure model will be enough to give online PS3 games their due and take on Microsoft's excellent Xbox Live service.

a huge percentage of our customers are not like [hardcore users]," says J Allard, a corporate vice president at Microsoft. "Recognize that more than 75 percent of the folks on Xbox have not played *Halo*. By introducing the core system, we are sending a signal to the market that we are committed to this part of the market, just as we are committed to [the hardcore market] with the Xbox 360 premium bundle."

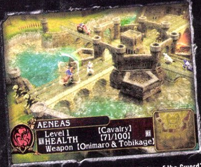
In contrast, Harrison stated at the Game Developers Conference Europe that the current plan is to have only one version of the PlayStation 3 at launch, but that the company will start selling different versions of it down the line as new peripherals (such as the hard drive or the EyeToy) become available, but not before then. However, since the system is supposedly going to be so expensive, at least according to SCE's own president, Ken Kutaragi, it might not be such a bad idea for Sony to offer different versions. The problem with Microsoft's plan is that the inclusion of the hard drive in one package but not in the other means that developers are going to have to make a decision at some point—use the hard drive to make games more technologically advanced (thus forcing core users to buy the hard drive anyway) or make two versions of the game, one that supports the hard drive and another that doesn't. It's going to be a giant mess at some point, but since the PS3 won't have the hard drive to start with, it's less of a problem for Sony.

What Sony *can* do is make a stripped-down version of the PS3, one with fewer bells and whistles, for those that maybe aren't quite ready to make the full jump into the high-def era. The other version of the unit can have all of the standard features revealed at E3 for a little extra money. That way, neither audience is neglected unless they want to make the jump to high definition. At any rate, Sony is still investigating potential price points and offers, but we should know more at the Tokyo Game Show and in the months following. «

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2007

ONE MAN'S CREATION IS ANOTHER'S DEMISE.

The battle begins anew in SOULCALIBUR III when Nightmare returns to a world inhabited by classic and new warriors. Create and play with a character choosing the face, hair, armor and weapons you want in "Character Creation" mode. Employ strategy and classic combat to lead your original character and the team to victory in "Chronicles of the Sword" mode. Experience the world of SOULCALIBUR like never before.



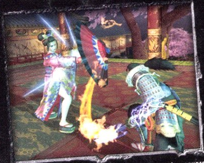
AENEAS

Level 1 [Cavalry]

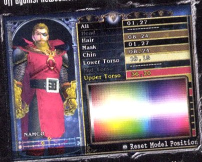
HEALTH [71/100]

Weapon [Onimaro & Tobikage]

Explore the SOULCALIBUR world in "Chronicles of the Sword" and test your abilities in a real-time simulation.



Battle classic SOULCALIBUR warriors like Mitsurugi or square off against newcomers such as Zasalamel, Setsuka and Tira.



All	01,27
Head	
Hair	08,24
Mask	01,27
Chin	08,24
Lower Torso	10,15
Mid Torso	
Upper Torso	36,20

Create your own character and battle other players or legendary SOULCALIBUR warriors.

RATING PENDING

RP

Visit www.esrb.org for updated rating information.

ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

PlayStation 2

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NEWS

THE FANTASY DELAYED

Square Enix and Sony Pictures revealed that *Advent Children*, the CG film sequel to *Final Fantasy VII,* has been delayed in North America to a "holiday" release. This means that neither the UMD nor the special-edition two-disc DVD version of the film will be available until sometime in late November or early December, just in time to make store shelves even more crowded.

In other *Advent Children* news, Square Enix says there will be a theatrical version of the movie, but it will only be released in major Japanese cities. Also, tickets will be made available only to members of the official *Final Fantasy VII* fan club. There's currently no word on whether the North American market will receive similar treatment, but don't hold your breath. «

MORE PSP IN YOUR FUTURE

If you thought Sony was going to stop at e-mail and Web browsing for the PSP, you thought wrong. In an interview with Japanese website ITmedia, a Sony representative said that the company is currently working on giving the PSP some additional functionality, namely better Java support as well as support for Flash animation to make its Web-browsing capabilities a little more robust. Sony also plans to release peripherals that will make using these added features a little easier. Among the devices scheduled for release are a keyboard and mouse, though we must say people will look a little awkward holding a keyboard and mouse while walking down the street with their PSPs. But then again, you have to keep people busy with something if there aren't any games. «

THE OUTSIDER

YOU RUINED MY LIFE: A ONE-ACT PLAY

ROBIN WILSON is lead singer for the Gin Blossoms, and enjoys physics and cooking shows. Find him on 1UP at theoutsider.1UP.com.

Teenager: Robin, you ruined my life.

Robin: What the hell are you talking about? And don't curse.

Teenager: See, this is the kind of hypocrisy I'm talking about. Because of you, my mom took away my copy of *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas.*

Robin: Do you even know what hypocrisy is?

Teenager: Yes, it's when you say one thing and do another.

Robin: Very good, five points for Gryffindor.

Teenager: Well, why did you tell her to take my games away? I work hard to pay for my own games. It's not fair. It's a gosh-darned gyp!

Robin: No cursing! And I never told your mom to take your games away. What I said, with specific reference to *San Andreas,* was that a 14-year-old "should not be playing that."

Teenager: Well, first she said no to *GTA*, but now I'm not allowed to play any M-rated games, period! No more *Area 51* or *God of War*. The most fun genre of videogames was stripped away from me!

Robin: You're making my point for me: If you don't know the difference between a rating and a genre, then you're not qualified to face the kinds of choices available to you in a game like *GTA*.

Teenager: Well, what about games like *Destroy All Humans*? Just in the first level, you kill and extract the brains of about 60 people, and it's rated T. *GTA* is rated M for drug use, language, and a bit of blood, which doesn't seem nearly as bad.

Robin: That's exactly right. There's a big difference between "normal" cartoon violence and the types of choices available in *GTA*. Here's a relevant anecdote...

Teenager: Er, a what?

Robin: I once let a friend's kid play *Vice City*. I told him he could drive any vehicle and explore the world, and I showed him lots of other cool stuff. But I was clear that he was not to use any weapons or hurt anyone. I shook him hard and screamed in his cute little 8-year-old face so that he got the point. "No killing!" I said. But as soon as I left the room, that little snot went on a bloody rampage. When given the choice, the 8-year-old chose bloody violence. It's natural.

Teenager: But I've got 11- and 12-year-old friends who play those games, and they're not psychotic. Same with their younger brothers. I don't see any point in gaming if you can't play M-rated games.

Robin: You're confused. If you can't find a way to have fun playing *Ratchet & Clank, Katamari Damacy*, or *Need for Speed*, then you have bigger problems than these and maybe videogames aren't for you. The real point here is that your mom should follow the ratings on the box until she knows for herself what's in the game. When she decides that you can handle it, then no one on Earth has the right to tell her she's wrong. Now tell me more about the time you tried to trick your parents into getting you *Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude.* «

"MAYBE VIDEOGAMES AREN'T FOR YOU."

OCTOBER 2K5

THE MONTH AHEAD FOR YOU AND YOUR PLAYSTATION

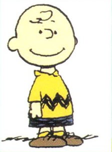
SUN MON TUES WED THUR FRI SAT

01

Let the pies fly, as according to some round people, this is the start of Pizza Month. We recommend Zachary's in Berkeley for some deep-dish delights.

02

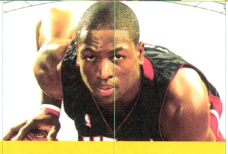
Dude, it's freakin' **Charlie Brown's birthday**, as the first *Peanuts* strip was printed today, but in 1950. Fifty-five years later and that fool still can't kick his football.



04

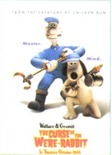
Keep your mind on the money, and the money on games like ***Conflict: Global Terror, NBA 06, Romancing SaGa,*** and ***FIFA Soccer 06,*** which debut today.

[NEW GAMES]



07

Wallace & Gromit: Curse of the Were-Rabbit opens today. As fans of Aardman, we hope the aptly named Angry Kid makes a zany and, dare we say, angry appearance.


FROM THE CREATORS OF CHICKEN RUN
Master.
Mind.
Wallace & Gromit
THE CURSE OF THE WERE-RABBIT
In Theaters October 2005

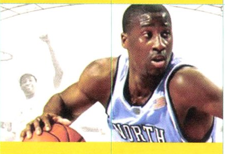
09

Knock on some Norwegian wood today: It's **Leif Erikson Day**! Isn't it wacky that on the same day a Viking found our country, Scott Bakula is born centuries later?

11

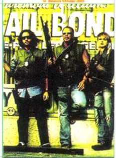
Rush on over to the store and plunk down some dollars for ***LA Rush, Ty 3, Nightmare Before Christmas,*** and ***NCAA March Madness 06.***

[NEW GAMES]



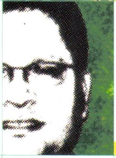
14

Today, Keira Knightley stars as **Domino Harvey**, a real-life model turned bounty hunter. Yikes! There's also a remake of John Carpenter's ***The Fog*** in theaters today.



16

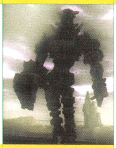
Oh man, today is **Boss's Day**. We'd tell you all about how awesome Mr. TommyB is today, but it's a Sunday, and we're all too busy living our lives.



18

Legalize that tender by spending it on ***Blitz: The League, The Warriors, Shadow of the Colossus,*** and ***Tony Hawk's American Wasteland.***

[NEW GAMES]

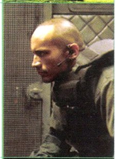


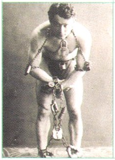
20

Oddly named, yet still badass, **Viggo Mortensen** celebrates his emergence from the womb. You might know him better as Aragorn. Or Lucifer.

21

Doom (the movie) comes out today. It's really easy to make silly jokes about The Rock and whatnot, but we have to admit the first-person scenes look kinda neat.





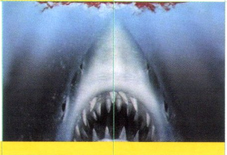
24/31

When you start your seven-day countdown till you wear your rad ninja costume for **Halloween**, remember this: **Houdini got ended** by his own appendix on Halloween.

25

Money flies from your pocket to the store for ***Soul Calibur III, Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, SSX on Tour, Jaws Unleashed,*** and ***Spartan: Total Warrior.***

[NEW GAMES]



28

The first one was an amusing distraction, and seven years later, ***The Legend of Zorro*** comes out. We hope Mikey Douglas hasn't aged Catherine Zeta-Jones much.

DEATH AS FAR AS

"IT WILL BE ONE OF THE FALL'S MUST-PLAY GAMES" PSM

"THE TITLE OOZES WITH ENOUGH STYLE TO KEEP EVEN THE MOST COLD-HEARTED GAMERS ENTERTAINED" GAMEINFORMER.COM

XBOX

NINTENDO GAMECUBE

TOTAL WARRIOR

MATURE 17+
M
Blood
Violence
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

PlayStation 2

the CREATIVE ASSEMBLY

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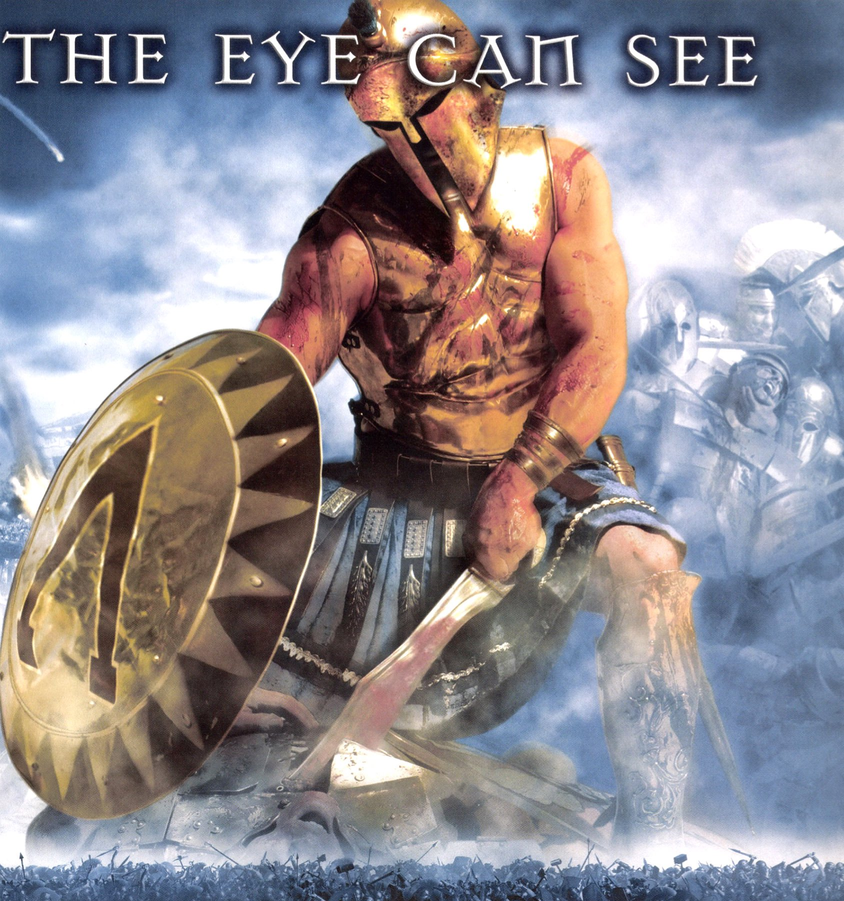

ou are the Total Warrior. An orphan, raised by the Spartans to fight, chosen by the gods to win,
ou must prove your worth in the most epic battles ever seen on console.

ght alongside thousands of fearless warriors, amid blood-soaked battlefields that stretch for
niles. Nothing can stop you, not the might of Rome, the wrath of mythical monsters or the evil of
lack magicians. Master skills, god-given powers and legendary weapons to follow your destiny
om Warrior, to Hero – to Legend.

SPARTAN™
TOTAL WARRIOR

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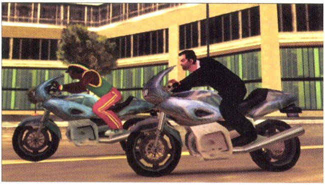
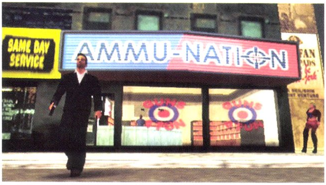
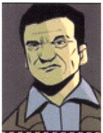
CHARACTERS WITH CHARACTER

GREAT GAMES ARE MADE OF THESE

This is our salute to the characters who make the games. No matter what genre or platform, every game has a character (yes, we consider the L block in *Tetris* a character), and oftentimes, it's these characters that help elevate a title from a mere nothing to an inspiration for all gamers. We can't say for sure if anyone on the following pages will be as iconic as Mario or Sonic (OK, we assume Solid Snake is pretty iconic), but we'll make the call that these are the more important characters for the immediate future. Whether they're wizard wunderkinds or inanimate traps or gangsters with something to prove, here's our rundown of the memorable characters for the months to come.

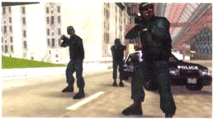


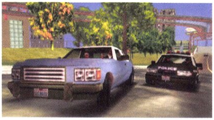


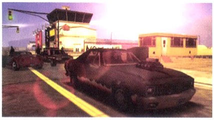


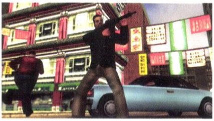
VITAL STATS

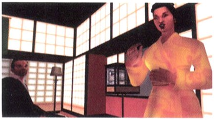
Name:
Toni Cipriani
Occupation:
Mischief-maker for the Salvatore Leone family
First appearance:
Grand Theft Auto III
Why he matters:
He's the main capo in the PSP's first true killer app.

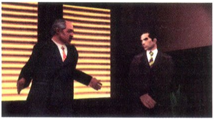


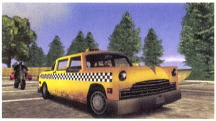


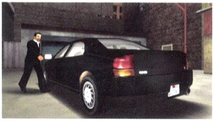


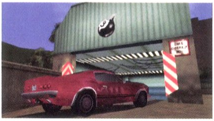












GRAND THEFT AUTO:
LIBERTY CITY STORIES
A CITY IN YOUR POCKET

PSP

Every *Grand Theft Auto* game, even dating back to the quirky top-down-perspective early titles, has given us plenty of zany characters, and with *GTA: Vice City*, the franchise started to flesh out its main stars. We recently got some hands-on time with *GTA: Liberty City Stories*, and for that hour or so, we got sucked into Toni's world.

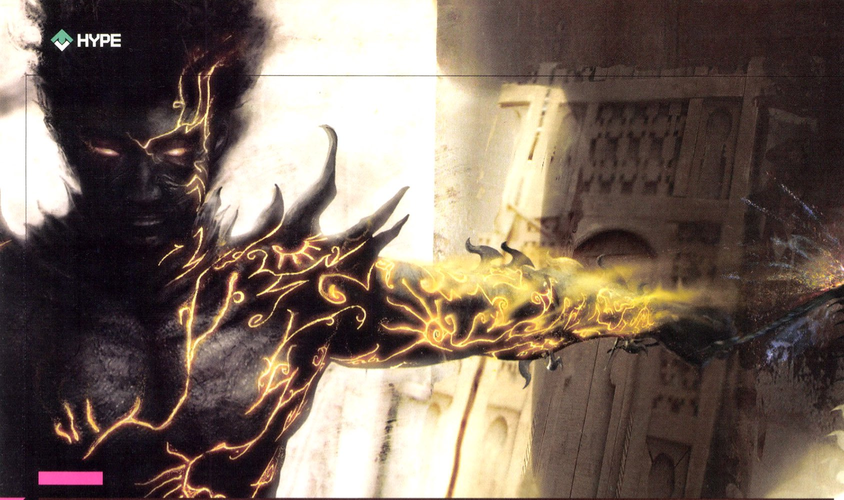
Toni goes on the same sort of missions you'd find in any other *GTA* title. The first one merely involves him driving his new boss, Vincenzo "Vinnie" Cilli, over to his first safe house. Other missions have Toni clipping the bodyguard of a Sindacco family informant, driving Sal Leone safely away from the police, and using an assault rifle to take down pursuing Secret Service agents while riding on a boat piloted by Sal. A particular favorite mission of ours involves a priest ordering Toni to absolve his sins by assassinating a rapper, an actor, and a music diva with a rocket launcher.

So, how do you walk around Liberty City and perform these grisly duties without a second analog stick? If you just want to move the camera around, you can hold down the L trigger and then move the little analog nub. If you want to aim, hold down the R trigger (to get your gun out) and use the D-pad to select your target. If you don't trust the autotargeting, or if you want more finesse with your aim, you can hold down the L trigger and tap Down on the D-pad (while still holding down the R trigger to keep your gun out) to make time slow down, giving you more time to line up an accurate shot. It sounds kinda complicated (apparently, the fellows at Rockstar Leeds have dexterous fingers), but once you do this a few times, it feels quite natural. In terms of weapons, Ammu-Nation is still around, plus there's a new store that specializes in heavy artillery (rocket launchers, machine guns, etc.) called Phil Cassidy's Fully Cocked. So it looks like Liberty City puts a ban on heavy-weapons stores in the time between *LCS* and *GTA3*.

Driving in Liberty City still feels pretty much the same—the motorcycles are still squirrelly, the sports cars (some of which are new to this game, which implies that some models were discontinued by *GTA3*'s spot in the timeline) feel silky smooth, and the trucks can't turn worth a damn. All the minigames are still here, such as ferrying people around in taxis, saving people in ambulances, and whatnot. Another "back in my day" change in *LCS* is that Liberty City has ferries (which, obviously, were closed and put out of commission before *GTA3*); we imagine taking a ferry will be similar to taking a train in *GTA3*, except on water instead of train tracks.

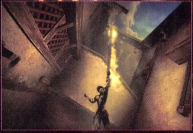
Additionally, there will be 10 full radio stations complete with commercials and chronologically appropriate licensed music. Everything we've seen of *Liberty City Stories* so far shows that not even the PSP's size can prevent Toni from doing what he wants.

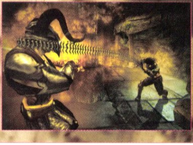
Pub. Rockstar **Dev.** Rockstar Leeds **Release** October

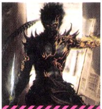


PRINCE OF PERSIA 3

THE PRINCE OF PERSIA HAS AN EVIL TWIN—AND IT IS HIM







VITAL STATS

Name:
The Dark Prince

Occupation:
The Prince of Persia's evil twin

First appearance:
Prince of Persia 3

Why he matters:
The Jekyll and Hyde angle is cool—and the Dark Prince looks like a real badass.

Let's be clear: The Dark Prince in the upcoming *Prince of Persia 3* is *not* a separate character. In fact, he and the Prince are *one and the same*, though each character will be playable in separate missions. This will make sense in a moment.

First, a story recap: The Prince has just returned to Babylon with his main squeeze, the Empress of Time, Kaileena. Expecting much-deserved peace and quiet, the Prince instead finds Babylon in a state of war—and the comely Kaileena the target of a plot against him. Tragically, Kaileena is kidnapped and then murdered before his very eyes. Her death literally releases the Sands of Time, a few grains of which touch the Prince, the rest of which go on to cause mayhem in Babylon. The Prince's father, the King of Persia, blames his son for the carnage, making the Prince a hunted fugitive in his own land.

It turns out that the Prince is infected by the Sands of Time that touched him. His resulting "sickness" comes in the form of an alternate personality, the Dark Prince.

HOW THE DARK PRINCE APPEARS

As the name implies, the Dark Prince is the Prince's evil twin, and as such is more brutal, more reckless, and just plain ruder than his gentler side. Think the Hulk: There's the nice Prince and the bad Prince, and they alternate, Jekyll and Hyde style, throughout the game. In appearance, the Dark Prince is markedly different from his counterpart.

Because the Dark Prince is basically an infection that's spreading, the Prince is in a constant state of tension throughout the game. Essentially, he has to find a "cure" before being consumed entirely.

The Prince becomes his darker self at various crisis points in the game. In order to calm down and revert to his normal self, the Prince must take a gulp of the Water of Life.

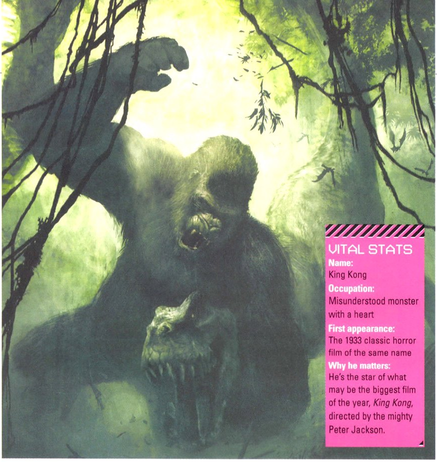
The Dark Prince does have a motivation: He wants the Babylon throne all to himself—and no one's going to stop him—not even, um, himself.

HOW THE DARK PRINCE ACTUALLY WORKS

Since they are one and the same, the Prince and the Dark Prince share many physical and fighting traits, so expect both princes to execute the familiar wild gymnastics from *POP* games past, as well as the free-form combat system that debuted in *Warrior Within*. Both princes will also be able to execute the effective one-hit "speed kill" being introduced in *POP3*.

The Dark Prince does have his own way of doing things. His weapon of choice is the daggertail, a sort of chain-whip that's deadliest in midrange combat. He can also use it Indiana Jones style as a tool to get to places even the Prince can't reach. For more-intimate fighting, the Dark Prince uses his Dagger of Time, which is most effective for stealth kills.

Pub. Ubisoft **Dev.** Ubisoft **Release** November



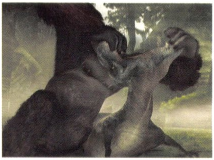
VITAL STATS

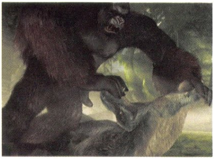
Name:
King Kong

Occupation:
Misunderstood monster with a heart

First appearance:
The 1933 classic horror film of the same name

Why he matters:
He's the star of what may be the biggest film of the year, *King Kong*, directed by the mighty Peter Jackson.





KING KONG

THERE'S NO ESCAPE FROM THIS APE

At the Games Convention in Leipzig, Germany, this past August, *Peter Jackson's King Kong* was crowned Best of Show for PS2. The press release noted in part, "[*Kong*] shows how an intense game environment can be created when a game designer and movie director collaborate on a videogame project."

We don't usually give in to the hype (yeah, we just help it along), but *Peter Jackson's King Kong* is too darn intriguing to dismiss as just another movie-based game. At the Leipzig show, it beat out heavy hitters like *Soul Calibur III* and *Resident Evil 4* for the big award. Consider the way *Kong* came to Ubisoft: Peter Jackson, reportedly unhappy with the job Electronic Arts did on the *Lord of the Rings* games, took matters into his own hands with *Kong*. Turns out he's a big fan of *Beyond Good & Evil*, so he personally contacted the game's designer, Michel Ancel—et voilà!—the rest is history.

Back at E3 last May, we were able to get some hands-on time with the game and were wowed. The game was equal parts first-person shooter, third-person out-of-control actioner, and traditional fighting game. The scenes where Kong swings, leaps, and wall-runs like a regular Prince of Persia were cool enough—then we experienced the fighting. Kong is brutally attacked by two T-Rexes at one point, and all the while he's fighting them, he must protect Ann Darrow, his blond love interest played in the film by Naomi Watts. We were exhausted after the demo.

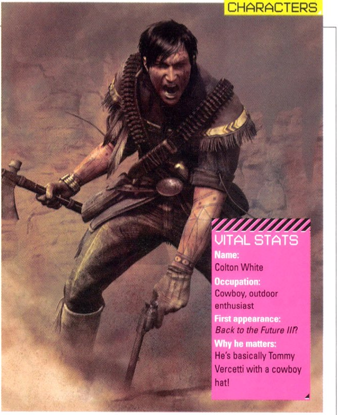
The game's Kong is appropriately massive, powerful, and intimidating, and looks well on his way to clamoring to the top.

PlayStation

PLAY IT!

You'll get to be king for a day, or at least a few hours, when you play the *King Kong* demo on the December DVD.

Pub. Ubisoft **Dev.** Ubisoft **Release** November



VITAL STATS

Name:
Colton White

Occupation:
Cowboy, outdoor enthusiast

First appearance:
Back to the Future III?

Why he matters:
He's basically Tommy Vercetti with a cowboy hat!

GUN

WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE

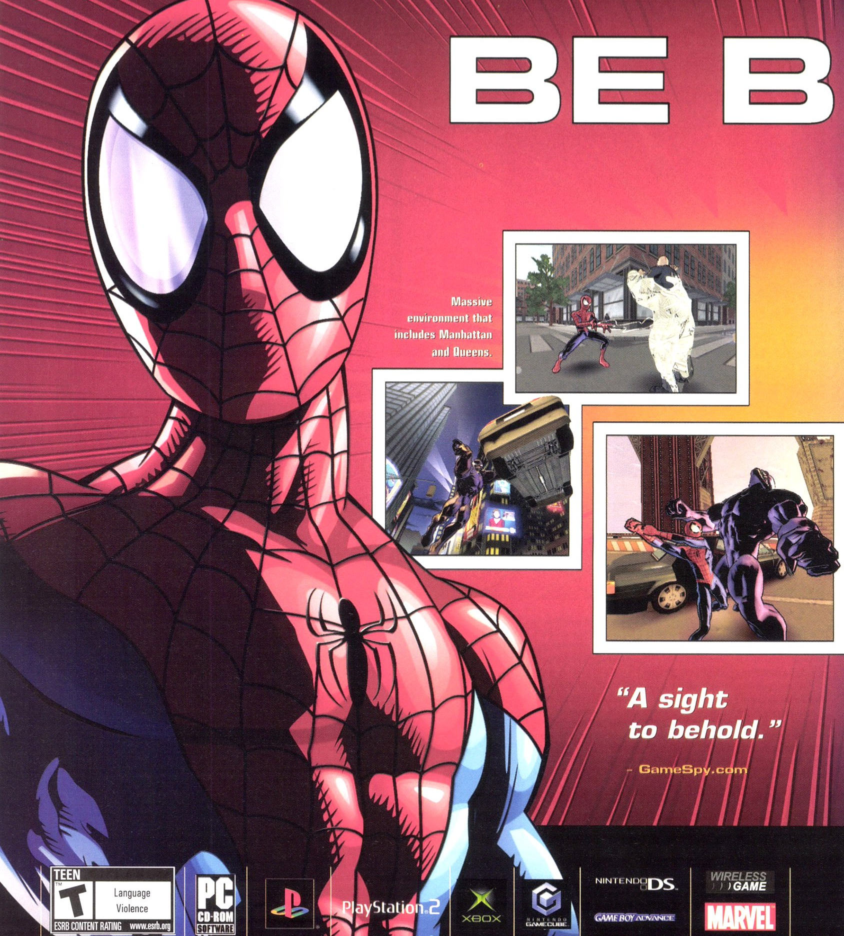
It was just like any other day for Colton White: He woke up in the morning, put on his moccasins, loaded up a rifle, and went out to shoot some wolves and bears with his father. That is, it was normal until his father told him he's basically adopted and has been living a lie all these years. Plus, there's that whole problem with the gang of former soldiers who would like nothing better than to put a tomahawk right between Colton's eyes. Yeah, he's got a lot on his plate, but Colton's a pretty tough guy—the kind who could kill a man 22 times before he hit the ground. Fortunately, that killer instinct will come in handy in *Gun*, a Western-style action game in development at Neversoft, the creative minds behind the *Tony Hawk* series of skateboarding games.

Of course, being a cowboy in the Old West means you, as Colton, have to look out for yourself and be ready do whatever it takes to make a living. You can take up a life as a bounty hunter, moving from town to town while tracking down criminals; try your luck at gambling; or even become a lawman—there are plenty of occupations available, but you can never forget your ultimate goal of tracking down the leader of the ex-soldiers and learning more about your actual parents. It's kind of like *Grand Theft Auto* in the sense that it lets you freely decide whether or not to perform different missions while working toward one end goal. Except there isn't any carjacking because, well, there weren't any cars back then. But you'll have a reliable horse to get you from town to town and help you out in the midst of a heated gunfight.

Pub. Activision **Dev.** Neversoft **Release** November

BE LEGENDARY

BE B



Massive environment that includes Manhattan and Queens.

"A sight to behold."

– GameSpy.com

TEEN
T
Language
Violence
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

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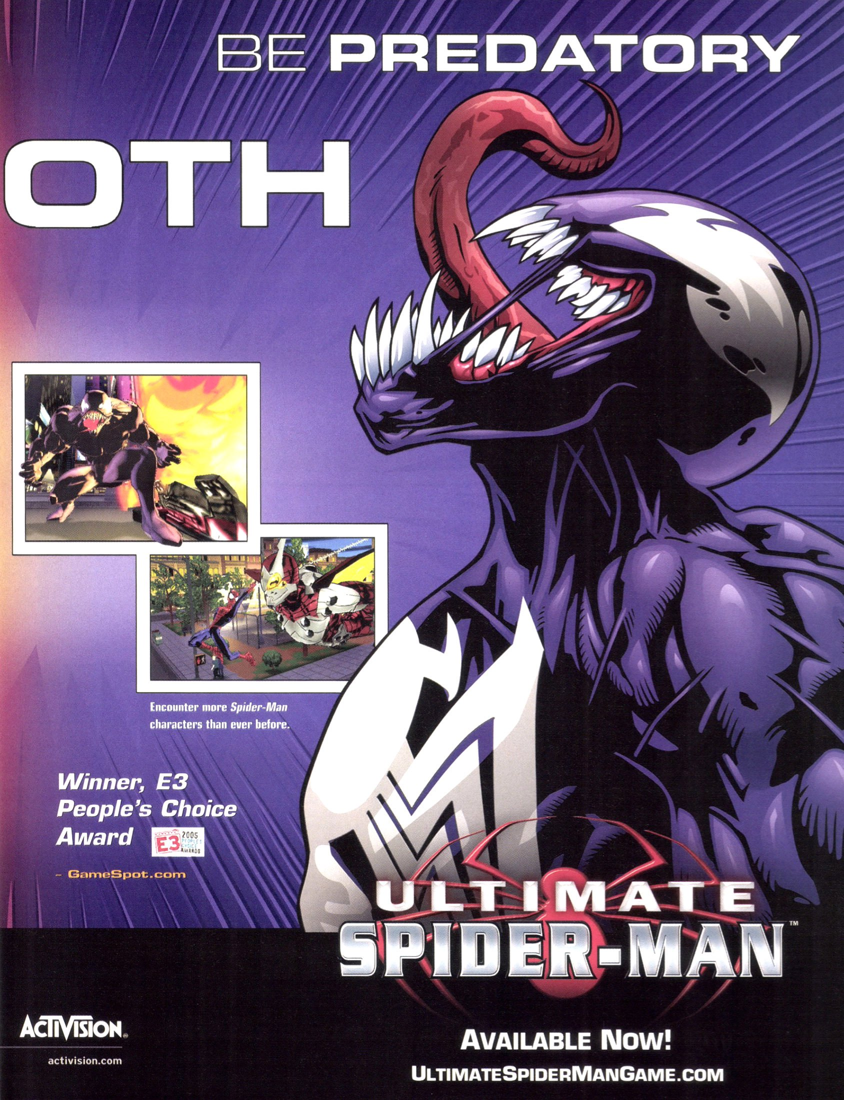
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RATCHET: DEADLOCKED

BATTLEFIELD RATCHET

It's slightly ironic that our major feature on characters would include a character that isn't much of a character anymore. This *Ratchet* title is less a character-driven action-platformer and more of a melee-combat multiplayer shooter.

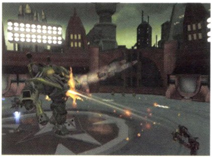
But that's OK. *Ratchet: Deadlocked* finds our reckless hero inside cyborg armor, with his robotic former sidekick Clank, who makes only a cameo. The story seems inconsequential, however, next to the sheer level of mayhem you encounter as you guide Ratchet through something like 85 levels of chaos: storming space stations, assaulting fortresses, blowing things up, and shooting anything that moves. You'll have plenty up your arsenal, with tighter controls than ever. Now you're probably thinking "online play," and you're right: *Deadlocked* features online support for up to 10 players in five modes: deathmatch, CTF, conquest, king of the hill, and juggernaut.

Ratchet and Clank themselves may have been de-emphasized here, but the actionfest *Deadlocked* still looks like a holiday must-buy.

VITAL STATS

Name:
Ratchet
Occupation:
Adventurer
First appearance:
Ratchet & Clank
Why he matters:
Insomniac has taken the best combat bits from previous *R&C* games and turned them into an adrenaline-packed melee shooter. We approve!

Pub. Sony CEA **Dev.** Insomniac **Release** Fall



VITAL STATS

Name:
Jak
Occupation:
Mischief maker, revolutionary, wasteland wanderer, pro driver
First appearance:
Jak and Daxter: The Precursor Legacy
Why he matters:
Jak X is much better than you think.

DAXTER PSP JAKS IN
Jak's longtime ottsel sidekick is getting his own action-platformer on the PSP. Due out next year, *Daxter*, as it is currently known, will let you unlock vehicles and other surprises that can be transferred to and played in *Jak X*.

JAK X: COMBAT RACING

CAR-JAKKED

Hey, Naughty Dog, what gives? When you first announced you were making a racing game based on the *Jak* series, we thought, "Oh, great, that's the end of that franchise, at least for you guys." After all, isn't that what you did with the *Crash Bandicoot* series when you released *Crash Team Racing* for the PlayStation back in '99?

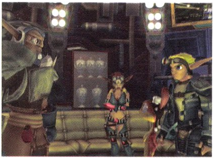
Hmm, but wasn't *Crash* also a superb *Mario Kart*–style racer that got just about everything right? Right. And now it seems you're doing the same thing with *Jak X: Combat Racing*—the preview build we played impressed the hell out of us.

Jak X begins with a story in which our hero, Jak, along with a few of his comrades, is poisoned at the reading of *Jak II* villain Krews' last will. Via hologram, Krews lays down this challenge: Jak and friends must win the Kras City Championship to get the antidote.

From there, *Jak X* looks to be a world-class racer: With a variety of customizable buggy-style vehicles, 24 tracks plus eight combat arenas (with support for up to six players online), and a fun choice of weapons and other power-ups (in the form of eco: green for missiles, red for mines, and blue for speed boosts, to name a few), this one seems to have it all. Car handling is terrific, providing a sense of speed and control reminiscent of *Burnout*.

Naughty Dog, if this really is the end of the *Jak* series as you head off into next-gen land, you're definitely ending it with flair. *Jak X* may be *the* racer we'll be looking forward to this fall.

Pub. Sony CEA **Dev.** Naughty Dog **Release** Fall



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MIDNIGHT

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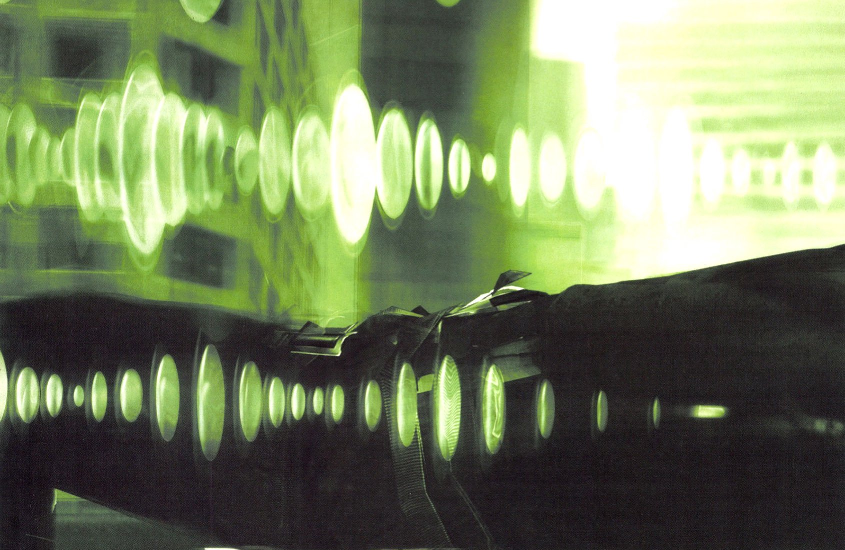

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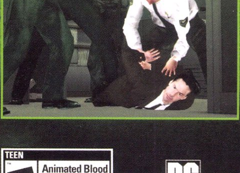

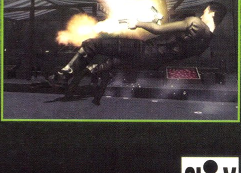

TEEN
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Animated Blood
Language
Violence
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

XBOX

PlayStation 2

Shiny Entertainment

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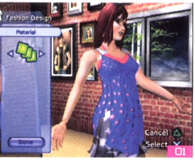

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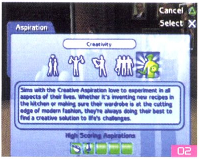
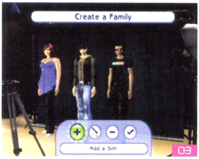


Sims with the Creative Aspiration love to experiment in all aspects of their lives. Whether it's inventing new recipes in the kitchen or making sure their wardrobe is at the cutting edge of modern fashion, they're always doing their best to find a creative solution to life's challenges.

02



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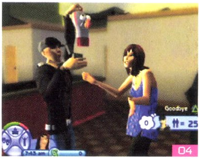

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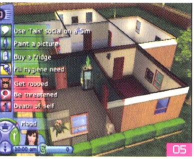

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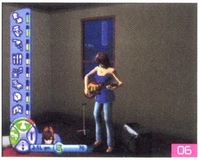

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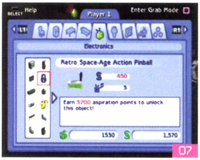
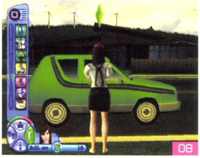


Earn 5700 aspiration points to unlock this object!

07



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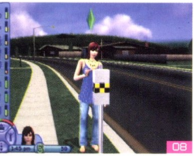

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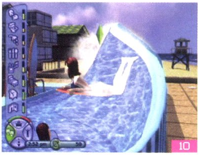

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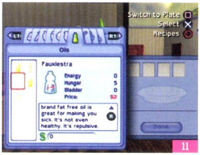
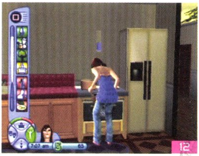


Energy	0
Hunger	5
Bladder	0
Price:	$2

brand fat free oil is great for making you sick. It's not even healthy. It's repulsive.

11



12

THE SIMS 2

LIKE LOOKING IN A MIRROR

Perhaps the reason why Electronic Arts' *Sims* series is so popular is because playing it is kind of like creating your own little reality show. The latest iteration offers a level of customization previously unheard of on the PS2. We played around with it to see how things have evolved.

VITAL STATS

Name:
Dina Opiem
Occupation:
Hand model
First appearance:
The Sims 2
Why she matters:
Because she can be whatever you want her to be.

01 The customization available in *The Sims 2*'s character-creation portion extends even as far as modifying the clothing. Each item will allow you to select a type of fabric, and some also allow you to adjust details like sleeve length. Here, Dina selects a polka-dotted blue material for her shirt.

02 It's not just what's on the outside that counts. One of the game's biggest additions is aspirations, which determine your Sim's preferences, desires, and fears. Dina indulges her artistic side by selecting the creativity aspiration.

03 Dina stands with her roommates, John Carlo and Terry. As in prior *Sims* games, *The Sims 2* lets you play in either a story mode or a more open sandbox mode. Story mode limits you to making a single Sim, but the sandbox mode allows you to create up to four family members.

04 Socialization is once again one of the major keys to having a happy, well-adjusted, successful Sim. In one of the new interactions available, John Carlo demonstrates that he is less than impressed by Dina's sock-puppet antics.

05 In addition to monitoring needs, you'll also need to pay attention to a new set of meters that show your Sim's wants. Fulfilling a want awards Aspiration points, while fulfilling a fear takes Aspiration points away. Dina scrubs away her fears about Hygiene in the shower.

06 Dina is building up her Creativity points, but she's also fulfilling a want. Since she's an artistic type, she'll be happiest when jamming on a guitar or painting a picture. In addition to expanding her talent, she'll simultaneously be earning Aspiration points.

07 So, what are these Aspiration points good for? Well, you can use them to unlock items in the Buy menu. Once Dina has 3,700 Aspiration points, she can choose to unlock this retro space-age action pinball machine for purchase.

08 Of course, it's impossible to get the simoleans needed to purchase new items for your pad without a job, and if you get a job that meshes with your aspiration, it can make your Sim happier. Dina happily heads off to her job as a hand model.

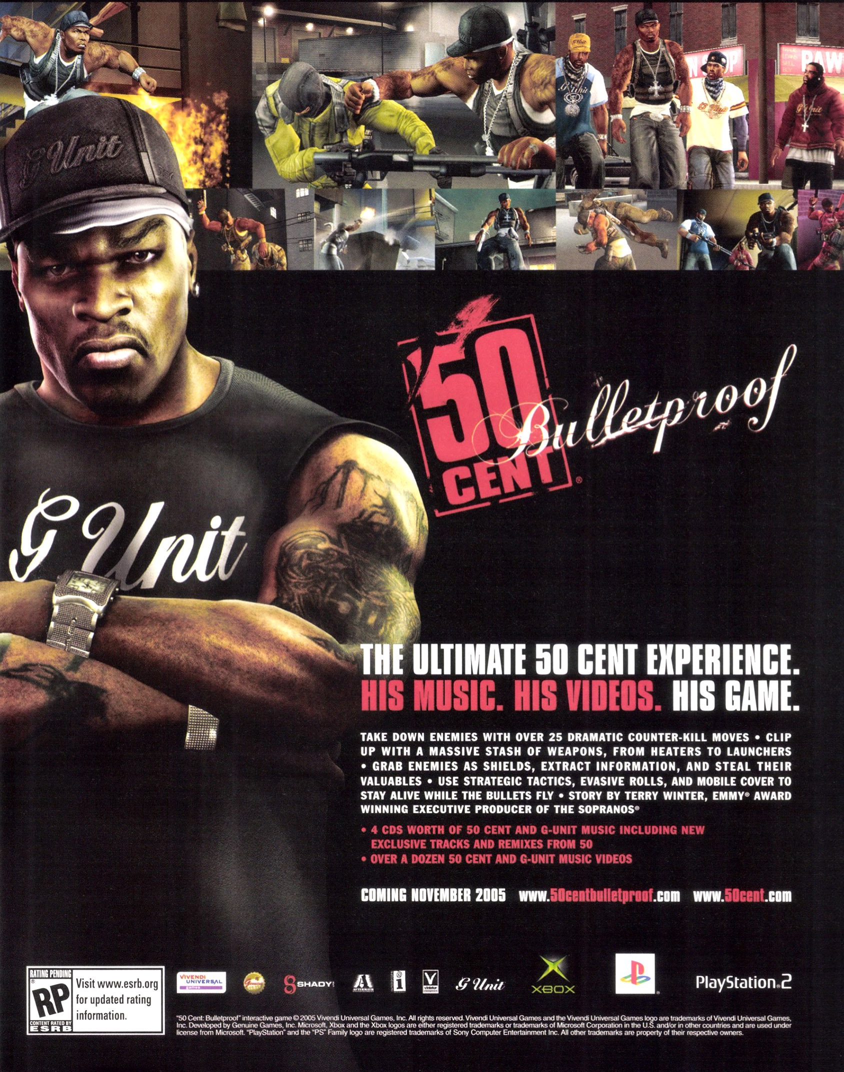
09 You don't have to go to work to get out of the house. You can unlock additional properties that you can visit at any time and even customize to your liking. Dina calls a cab to pick her up for a night on the town.

10 There are ways to entertain yourself beyond sitting on the couch and staring at the television—here, Dina has some fun on a surf machine. *The Sims 2* has 350 brand-new objects for your Sims to play around with.

11 Cooking also provides a lot of room for expression. As Dina learns new recipes, she can combine the individual ingredients in a multitude of ways; the final dish can fulfill hunger better than the individual ingredients would.

12 Dina's recipe for fruit compote improves her cooking skill, but recipes can also be used to temporarily enhance your Sim's mood or even improve a relationship with another Sim. Be careful, though—sometimes the recipes backfire and make your Sim sick.

Pub. EA Games **Dev.** EA Maxis **Release** November



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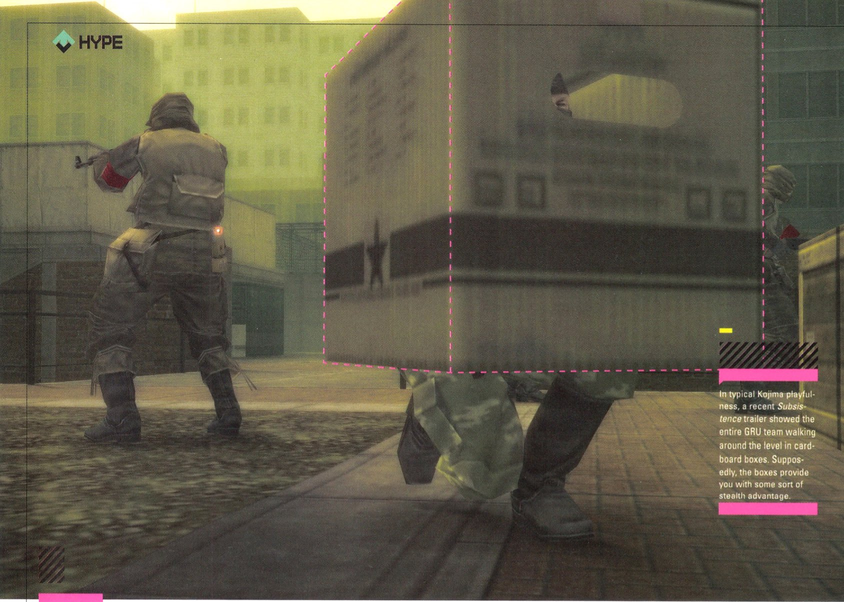


In typical Kojima playfulness, a recent *Subsistence* trailer showed the entire GRU team walking around the level in cardboard boxes. Supposedly, the boxes provide you with some sort of stealth advantage.

METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SUBSISTENCE

MGS SOCOM?!?

VITAL STATS

Name:
Snake
Occupation:
Badass Special Forces operative who listens to guards scream "I feel asleep!"
First appearance:
Metal Gear, 1987
Why he matters:
Because not only is he one of the definitive stealth-action heroes, but he's also leading his soldiers into the world of online play.

Yeah, we loved playing as Snake last year in *Metal Gear Solid 3*, but we admit that the game has a few flaws and is missing a feature or two that we would have really liked to have. Well, it seems that Kojima and his crack team have been listening, as they've been working on *Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsistence*, which seems like an awesome director's cut of an already-superb game experience.

While the announcement of a true third-person camera was pretty big, even bigger was the news that the fabled "*Metal Gear Online*" is finally happening, and it's in *Subsistence*. Kojima Productions, through its trailer, revealed a few interesting details about the online multiplayer gameplay. There will be three teams, the GRU, the KGB, and the Ocelot unit, and each team has a designated leader character. Obviously, Revolver Ocelot leads the Ocelot unit, while Snake leads the GRU and Raikov (the Russian Raiden copy) heads up the KGB. Players will usually start out playing as a soldier in one of the three units, and (this is a typical, playfully cryptic comment from Kojima) as they perform well, they will have the chance to play as a major character from *MGS3* (examples given were Snake, Ocelot, and Raikov, but we assume characters like Thunderbolt and The Pain will also be playable). Maps for multiplayer have been drawn from the main single-player game (such as Graniny Gorki Lab or Krasnogorje Mountain), with a few multiplayer-exclusive maps called Small Forest, Killhouse, Downtown, and Abolition Factory (we have no idea what that last one means or even looks like).

Here's a quick rundown of the various multiplayer modes:

SNEAKING MISSION

One player is Snake; everyone else is a guard. Guards win by killing Snake, and Snake wins by grabbing whatever item they're guarding.

CAPTURE MISSION

This is like capture the flag but with only one flag. Both teams work to capture the same object and bring it back to their base.

RESCUE MISSION

One side defends an object while the other side tries to destroy said object. Also, the defenders will need to bring the object from their starting position to a certain place on the map. Oddly enough, instead of respawning, players become ghosts when they die.

DEATHMATCH

Pretty obvious, a simple "every man for himself" mode.

TEAM DEATHMATCH

Like deathmatch, but it splits all players into two teams.

Also included are the original MSX (an early Japanese computer) versions of *Metal Gear* and *Metal Gear 2: Solid Snake*. Technically, *MG* for the NES was a port that was "inspired" by Kojima's original version. The two biggest differences between the NES and the MSX versions are in level design (buildings are laid out differently) and the presence of the Metal Gear (the NES version replaced the Metal Gear with a "Super Computer"). *Metal Gear 2* makes its first appearance in the States as well; it covers the time when Snake meets Roy Campbell; goes to Zanzibar Land; and fights random dudes called Gray Fox and Big Boss. It's pretty cool to be able to reexperience Snake's first two adventures as Kojima imagined them at the time.

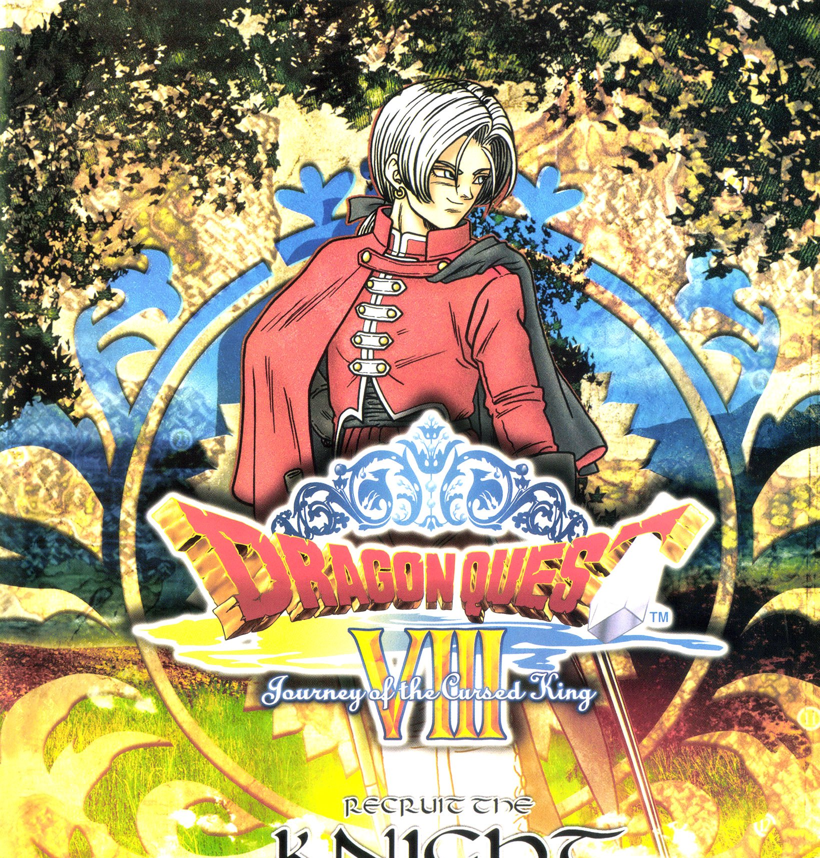
Pub. Konami **Dev.** Kojima Productions **Release** Spring 2006

DRAGON QUEST™ VIII
Journey of the Cursed King

Be The
HERO

DRAGON QUEST™ VIII
Journey of the Cursed King

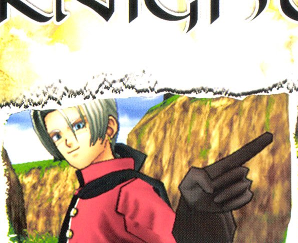
COUNT ON THE BANDIT



DRAGON QUEST™ VIII

Journey of the Cursed King

RECRUIT THE KNIGHT



DRAGON QUEST™
VIII
Journey of the Cursed King
UNLEASH THE
MAGICIAN

OVER LAND, ACROSS THE SEA, AND BEYOND THE HORIZON

TEEN
T
Alcohol Reference
Fantasy Violence
Simulated Gambling
Mild Language
Suggestive Themes
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

PlayStation 2

SQUARE ENIX
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THE JOURNEY BEGINS NOVEMBER 22, 2005

CASTLEVANIA
CURSE OF DARKNESS
WILL THE REAL BELMONT PLEASE STAND UP?

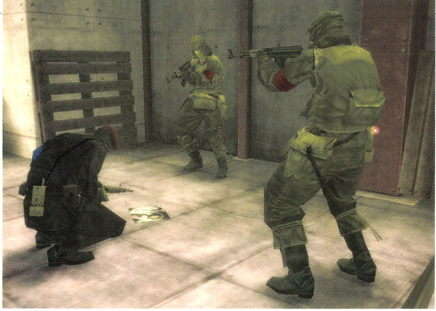
Life isn't easy for former servants of Dracula. You spend all of that time helping the Lord of Darkness pillage, plunder, and suck the blood of innocents, and what does it get you? Nothing, absolutely nothing, except for maybe a few lashings from a member of the famous Belmont clan of vampire hunters. Fortunately for Hector, he gave up that racket when Trevor Belmont came to town to vanquish Dracula, but the ol' bloodsucker cast a curse on the country just before he died, causing fear, hunger, and disease to spread. Three years of that is enough to drive anyone nuts, so Hector decides to revisit Dracula's old castle, where he comes across an old coworker, Isaac, who seems bent on getting Hector to embrace his old job and his evil ways by harnessing his devil-forging powers once more. But Hector has his own plans for Isaac.

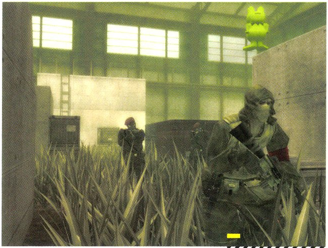
With the aid of various creatures, Hector ventures through the remnants of Dracula's old castle, not only to track down Isaac, but also to fight the minions of evil and rid the country of Dracula's power once and for all. Most of the monsters Hector can summon will serve different purposes—some will fill supplemental roles, like those of healers who can treat Hector's wounds in the middle of battle. Others will take a much more proactive role, fighting alongside Hector and dishing out some serious damage to any enemies in his path. Plus, over the course of the game, these creatures (as well as Hector) will grow in strength as more enemies are defeated, so it pays to use them as often as possible while searching the depths of the castle.

Pub. Konami **Dev.** Konami **Release** November

VITAL STATS

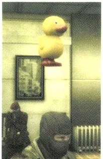
Name:
Hector
Occupation:
Devil forger, snappy dresser
First appearance:
Castlevania: Curse of Darkness (which takes place three years after *Castlevania III*)
Why he matters:
It's kind of cool that you get to play as one of Dracula's former buddies, and the emphasis on the helper devils should bring some interesting mechanics to the *Castlevania* series.

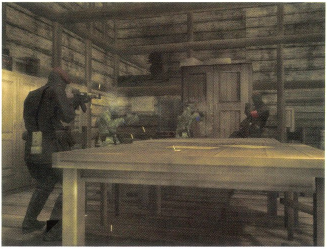


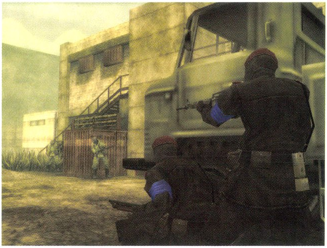


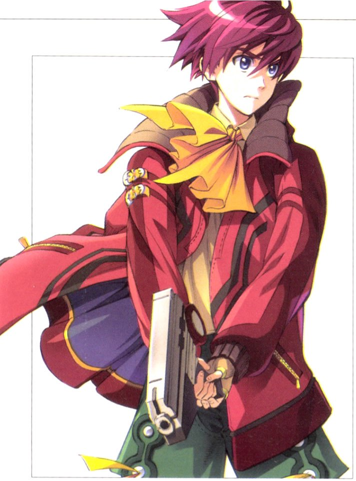
COLLECTION AGENCY

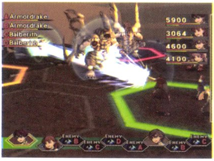
You'll notice that some of these screens show either those wacky little frogs (if you shot all of them when you played through *MGS3* the first time, you got a nifty prize) or little ducks. We suspect these are examples of the kinds of items you'll need to guard or capture in either the rescue, capture, or even sneaking mission. Another example of an item being used for gameplay purposes is in that screen at the top left, where an Ocelot soldier is forced to look down at a girlie magazine, making him vulnerable to rapid gunfire from soldiers on the GRU team.

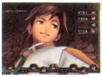


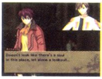












WILD ARMS 4

RUNNING WILD

Wild Arms is widely considered the first "good PS1 RPG," and it reigned happily supreme before the juggernaut that is *Final Fantasy VII* hit the system. In this new iteration of the series, Jude is just waltzing around, doing as he pleases, when he notices airplanes zipping through a giant hole in the sky. As he investigates, he runs into soldiers escorting a female prisoner. From that point on, all sorts of RPG mayhem break out. It'll be interesting to see how Jude's adventures will fare against the other non–*Final Fantasy* RPGs that are upcoming.

To keep up with the times, the developers have decided to change up the basic game. For example, when you're just zipping around the town or dungeons, the ACG system slows down everything except you—good for when you're racing another character or trying to get across some disappearing platforms. Combat looks and feels more like a strategy-RPG's, as you issue and execute commands across a hex-based map.

Pub. XSeed Games **Dev.** Sony CEI **Release** Winter

VITAL STATS

Name:
Jude
Occupation:
Random young fellow who can use the ARM (a staple of the series)
First appearance:
Wild Arms 4
Why he matters:
He's the main fellow in the first true PlayStation RPG franchise (really, there were RPGs before *FFVII*...and *Beyond the Beyond* doesn't count).

SHADOW HEARTS

FROM THE NEW WORLD

AMERICA THE TWISTED

Johnny Garland isn't a spiky-haired kid living in a mystical land full of trolls and smiling children. He's a 16-year-old detective living in 1920s New York who wants cases that involve more than finding missing cats. Shania drops her clothes when she transforms into various elementals during combat. Natan fights using a style he calls gun-fu. They are just the first few characters that we meet in this next installment of *Shadow Hearts*, published this time by XSeed (a company made up of Square Enix veterans) instead of Midway. We could yammer on about the game itself, but we'd rather mention the other absolutely insane and memorable characters you'll meet, like the giant cat who fights better when drunk, the senile ninja, or the badass mariachi player.

Pub. XSeed Games **Dev.** Nautilus **Release** Winter

VITAL STATS

Names:
Johnny Garland, Shania, and Natan
Occupations:
Detective and his two Native American buddies
First appearance:
Shadow Hearts: From the New World
Why they matter:
Because they are absolutely atypical characters in a genre filled with typicality

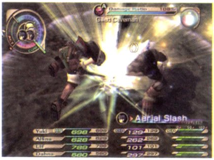
GRANDIA III

A GRAND OLD RPG

Yuki is a pretty typical kid who wants to fly around, go on zany adventures and make mischief. So far, he seems like a standard RPG protagonist, but he happens to be in an RPG that has pretty innovative combat.

The *Grandia* series has always used a quirky combat system that is half turn-based and half real time—you issue commands while the battle is happening in real time. No other developer has gotten real-time combat to work, so *Grandia III* already has a leg up. Then the developers added tweaks such as aerial combos (knock an enemy into the air and another party member can attack it in midflight) and the SAS system, which lets party members give warnings and advice during battle (like a buddy telling Yuki that he's about to get smashed by a monster).

Pub. Square Enix **Dev.** Game Arts **Release** Spring



VITAL STATS

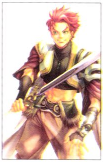
Name:
Yuki
Occupation:
Sky-pirate wannabe
First appearance:
Grandia III
Why he matters:
He's in an RPG with awesome combat.

SHINING FORCE NEO

A STRATEGY-RPG MINUS THE STRATEGY

Ever wonder what would happen if a design studio raised on Japanese RPGs and anime decided to try its hand at a *Diablo*-style hack-n-slasher? Wonder no more: *Shining Force Neo* is a dramatic reimagining of the venerable *Shining Force* strategy-RPG series (last seen on the Sega Saturn), with hyperactive pacing and a simply gorgeous visual style. Think of this as a zesty blend of the gameplay and art style of this year's *Shining Tears*, but with some authentic *Shining Force* sensibilities. Our hero, Max, will recruit 11 friends to help him beat the crap out of demon portals (read: monster generators, à la *Gauntlet*), upgrade the heck out of 70 weapons, and make the land of Yuna (not to be mistaken with the *FFX* and *X-2* girly) safe for halter-top-wearing effetes everywhere.

Pub. Sega **Dev.** Sega **Release** November



VITAL STATS

Name:
Max
Occupation:
Closer of demon portals
First appearance:
You're looking at it
Why he matters:
He's man enough to wear a halter top.

REI KUROSAWA

VITAL STATS

Names:
Rei Kurosawa, Miku Hinasaki, and Kei Amakura

Occupations:
Respectively, a photographer, her assistant, and a writer

First appearances:
You remember Miku from the first *Fatal Frame*; Rei and Kei are newcomers

Why they matter:
Each has significantly different abilities.

FATAL FRAME III
THE TORMENTED
FACE YOUR FEARS

The Tormented promises to be the most terrifying *Fatal Frame* yet. That's a very tall order, but from what we've seen, it just may fit the bill. Main character Rei spends her time switching between the real world and the "house of sleep," a nightmare world that begins to intrude into her waking life in the form of a sinister, growing tattoo.

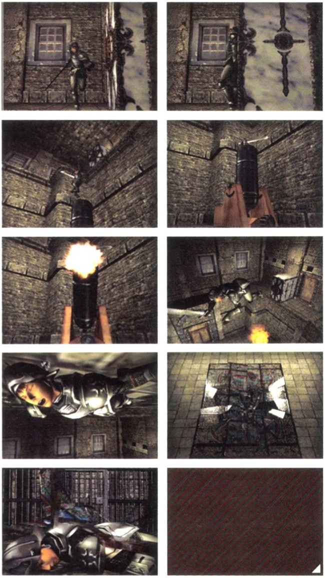
This is the first *Frame* to incorporate character-switching between three characters with different skills. Rei is fairly balanced, Miku fits in tiny spaces and has a very well-developed spirit sense, and Kei, severely lacking in a sixth sense, can move heavy objects and leap to spots the ladies can't reach.

Interestingly, *The Tormented* has many links to both previous games. Rei's assistant, Miku, is the same Miku who starred in the first game, and Mio and Mayu, twin leads of *Fatal Frame II*, are Kei's nieces. We're not sure if more connections exist, but we are certain that the move back to a modern-day setting is a big plus in the scare column.

KEI AMAKURA

MIKU HINASAKI

Pub. Tecmo **Dev.** Tecmo **Release** November



TRAPT
USE YOUR ILLUSIONS

If you've ever played one of Tecmo's deliciously twisted *Deception* strategy games, you know that the only characters worth caring about are the traps themselves. The games all share the same goal: Use an ever-growing arsenal of ever-more-diabolical devices to set and trigger traps at the right place and time to do the most damage to intruders in your domain. However, with the release of *Trapt*, the sort-of sequel to the *Deception* series, the designers have stepped things up a notch with a type of snare known as a "dark illusion" trap.

Dark illusions are especially intricate and deadly traps that are revealed through trial-and-error combinations of other traps. In the example shown here, a knight is pushed off a ledge into a cannon, the cannon fires into the ceiling, and the knight rebounds off the ceiling and falls through a stained-glass window that's opened in the floor to a deep pit below. And you *know* that's gonna leave a mark.

VITAL STATS

Name:
Dark illusion

Occupation:
Ridiculously complex device of destruction

First appearance:
Trapt

Why it matters:
It's sick and funny, just like us.

Pub. Tecmo **Dev.** Tecmo **Release** October

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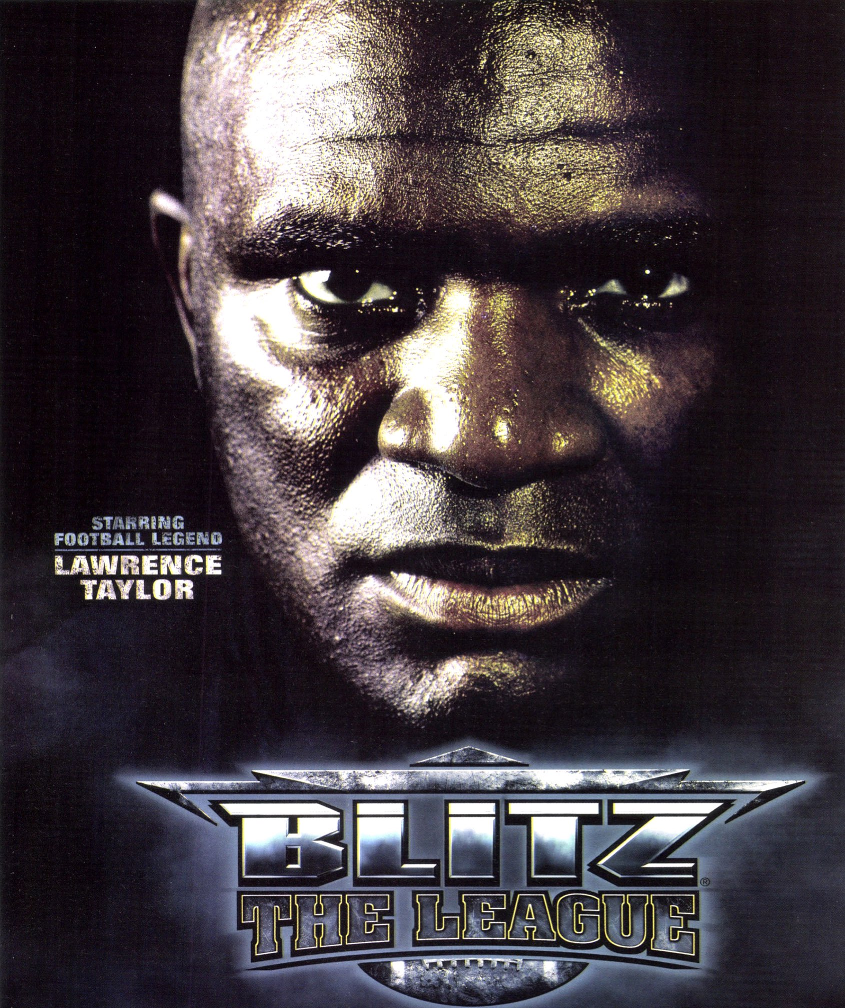
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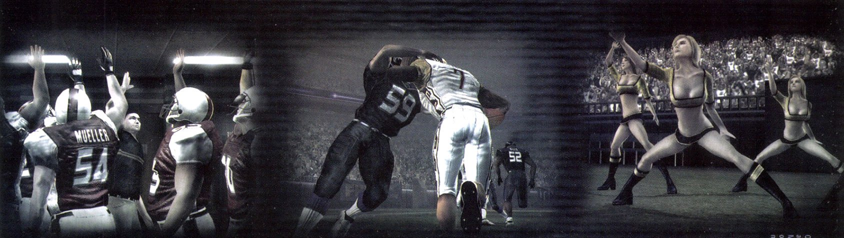

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THEY WANT YOU TO SEE.

THEN THERE'S
THE GAME WE PLAY.

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CHEERLEADERS & PARTYING.

MONEY & POLITICS.

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YOU FOLLOW ONE SACRED RULE:

WIN AT ANY COST.

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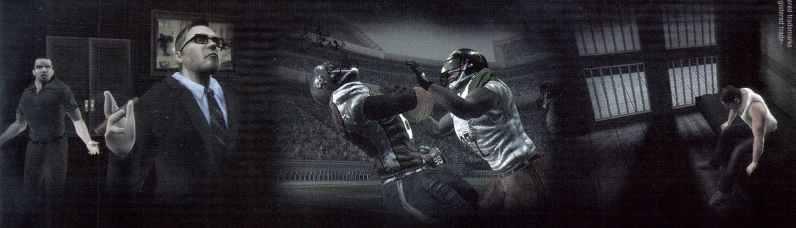

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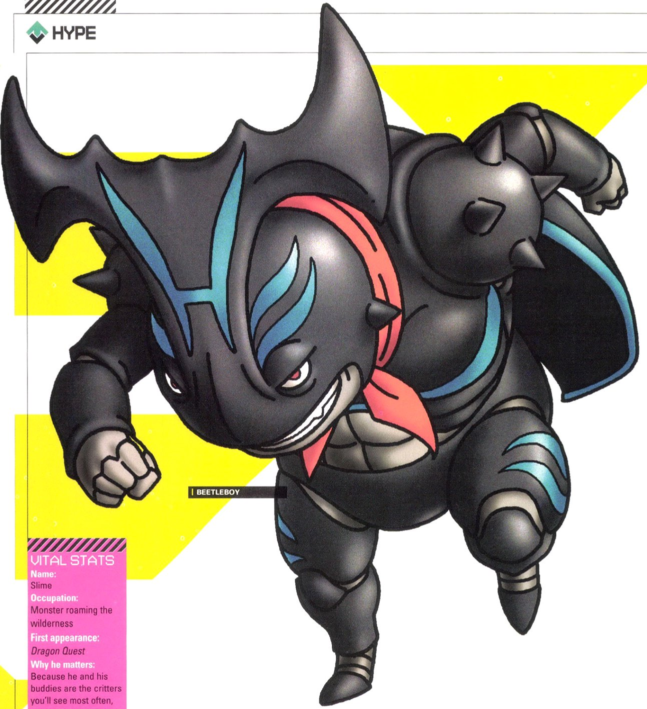
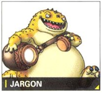
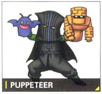


BEETLEBOY

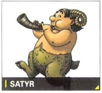
This will be Beetleboy's first appearance in the *Dragon Quest* franchise. He's awesome, because in the game, he's constantly moving his legs as though he's getting ready to charge into you. That's a move we do nowadays.



JARGON



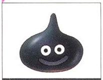
PUPPETEER



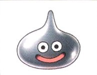
SATYR

VITAL STATS

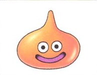
Name:
Slime
Occupation:
Monster roaming the wilderness
First appearance:
Dragon Quest
Why he matters:
Because he and his buddies are the critters you'll see most often, as you fight hundreds upon hundreds of them.



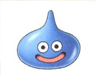
DARK SLIME



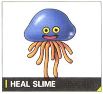
METAL SLIME



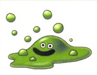
SHE-SLIME



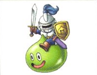
SLIME



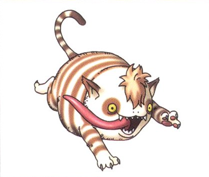
HEAL SLIME



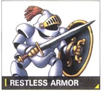
BUBBLE SLIME



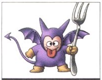
SLIME KNIGHT



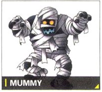
CANDY CAT



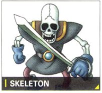
RESTLESS ARMOR



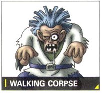
IMP



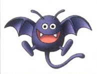
MUMMY



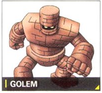
SKELETON



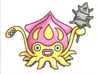
WALKING CORPSE



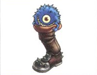
DRACKY



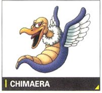
GOLEM



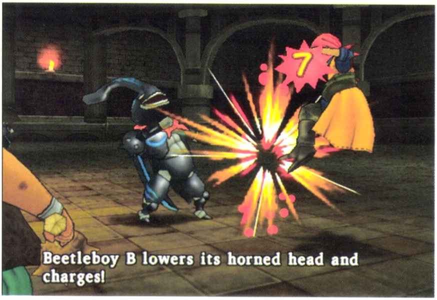
KHALAMARI KID

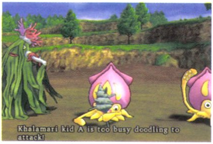


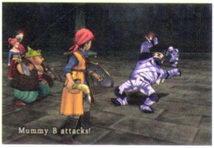
SKIPPER

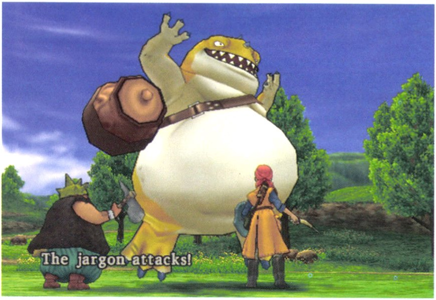


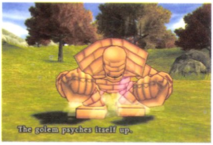
CHIMAERA

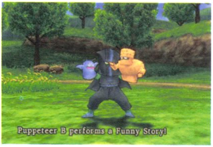












The walking corpse attacks!

Skipper A attacks!

The skeleton attacks!

The imp casts Thwack!
But the imp's MP aren't sufficient.

DRAGON QUEST VIII

A TRUE MONSTER MASH

The goofy caricatures here are just a small sample (there are 300 types total) of the weird and quirky monsters that you'll be smacking, and in some cases training, in *Dragon Quest VIII*. Akira Toriyama, best known for creating the *Dragon Ball* franchise, also happens to be the main character and monster designer for the *Dragon Quest* franchise. With *DQ8* adopting an animated style (in fact, that art style was one of the reasons *DQ* creator Yuji Horii selected Level-5 as the developer of *DQ8*), this is the first time that the in-game monsters look just like Toriyama's original designs. Not only is the monsters' appearance consistent with Toriyama's design, but they animate fluidly as well, making the combat resemble something out of *Dragon Ball* rather than a typical RPG battle.

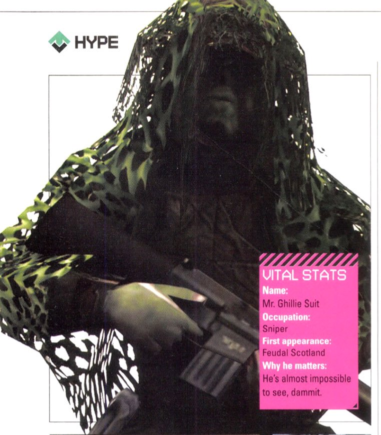
Besides being visually wacky, the general monster design also demonstrates *DQ8*'s feel of lighthearted adventure. Sure, there are traditional fantasy conventions, like cursed kings and evil mages, but they are countered by monsters like the candy cat or by moments such as when you run into battle only to see that all of the monsters are sleeping. Also, Square Enix specifically cast British soap opera actors for the voice work to give the game's cut-scenes that sort of goofy, melodramatic feel.

We got some hands-on time with the first few hours of the game, and the game feels like a totally old-school *DQ* with a nice coat of primer, courtesy of the visuals. Walking around town and seeing everyone just doing their thing, then going outside and fighting monsters in the hills while the sun is setting is oddly calming. It almost makes us feel bad to fight and vanquish so many of these zany critters, but that's the way the job works.

One new feature is the creation of a monster team. As you go around the world fighting monsters, some will be either exceptionally impressed or intimidated by you. As a result, you can actually recruit them to your side and keep them in reserve. There are two things you can do with the monsters as a result: You can have them substitute for your own party during combat, or you can use them in the arena. In regular combat, the three monsters you decide to keep in reserve replace your regular party members (Yangus, Jessica, Angelo), and you can command them just as you normally would command your party. In the arena, travelers from around the world train three-monster teams to fight each other for money. Therefore, you can actually consider regular combat to be scouting for your next monster team in the arena. So not only do you spend a lot of time fighting these monsters, but you can actually use them. Pretty versatile monsters we got here.

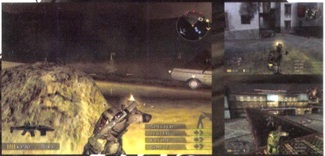
Pub. Square Enix **Dev.** Level-5 **Release** Spring 2006

Just because these monsters look way zany and colorful, don't consider this game a pushover. *Dragon Quest* is old school and hardcore—you gotta fight hundreds, even thousands of these critters to level up. There's an early quest to go get a crystal ball in a cave (OK, it's the very first quest), and we had to fight enough to make our characters level 5 just to survive in the cave. In fact, we got beaten up just by slimes a couple times. Then again, that's with only the main character and Yangus in the party; we assume things get easier once you add Jessica and Angelo to the mix.



VITAL STATS

Name:
Mr. Ghillie Suit
Occupation:
Sniper
First appearance:
Feudal Scotland
Why he matters:
He's almost impossible to see, dammit.



SOCOM 3:
U.S. NAVY SEALS
BRING YOUR OWN COVER

In addition to introducing 32-player matches, enormous levels, and new game types to *SOCOM 3*'s online mode, Zipper is also promising a feature that *SOCOM* fans have been clamoring for since the first game: the ghillie suit.

If you're not familiar with the term, allow us to educate you. A ghillie suit is a heavily modified camouflage suit that allows the wearer to both blend in with his surroundings and stay motionless for hours at a time. Ever seen a picture of what looks like Swamp Thing with a gun? That'd be a ghillie suit. They're customized to match their surroundings as much as possible and are often reinforced on the front to allow for as much comfort as possible while the wearer lies prone on hard, wet ground.

A good ghillie suit makes the wearer look like a pile of vegetable detritus when motionless (and twice as creepy when in motion). Now you can get one of your very own. Sony is keeping mum on the exact requirements for unlocking it, but the designers have said that it will "not be easy" to obtain; our guess is that you'll need to beat the single-player mode before wearing this bad boy.

Also keep in mind that a ghillie suit is *very* heavy. Since *SOCOM 3* introduces an encumbrance statistic, which bases player speed on the amount of weight being carried, you're going to have to commit to a minimum of motion if you want to be this well hidden. The trade-off is that the suit will be different for each map, giving the wearer the best chance of blending in with his surroundings.

It's a dream for snipers...and a nightmare for everyone else.

Pub. Sony CEA **Dev.** Zipper Interactive **Release** October

CALL OF DUTY:
BIG RED ONE
FIGHTING BAND OF BROS.

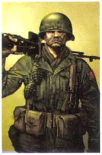
What makes *Call of Duty: Big Red One* stand out? The presence of Italians! OK, there's more than that (the traditional cinematic presentation, authentic weapons, etc.), but *Big Red One* will be the first WWII shooter to have missions in Sicily, among other places. As part of the 1st Infantry Division (nicknamed the Big Red One due to its patch being, well, a red 1), you'll fight through missions that span from Operation Torch in Africa to Operation Husky in Sicily to good ol' D-Day.

One interesting break from tradition is that this is the first *COD* not to cast you as several different characters. You are one soldier through and through, no jumping perspectives. The developers feel that the fact that the Big Red One travels so much makes up for the lack of other playable characters. Other details that help make you feel like a part of the Big Red One include squad chatter and flashbacks and cut-scenes that show how all the other soldiers are changing due to the war. So not only will there be a ton of guys onscreen (a *COD* tradition), but your buddies will be shouting at each other, either warning you of danger or requesting cover fire or just freaking out over the general carnage of war. These minor elements all help maintain the *COD* creed that not one person won the war, but a whole group of guys, like the members of the Big Red One.

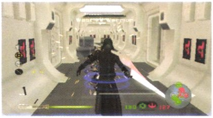
Pub. Activision **Dev.** Treyarch **Release** October

VITAL STATS

Name:
The 1st Infantry Division
Occupation:
Division in the Army.
First appearance:
May 1917
Why they matter:
They went all over the place in WWII.



STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT II
YOU GET TO KILL GUNGANS AND EWOKS—NUFF SAID!



VITAL STATS

Names:
The Rebel, the Imperial, the Mercenary
Occupations:
American pop icons
First appearance:
The 1977 blockbuster *Star Wars: A New Hope*
Why they matter:
Dude, it's *Star Wars*! And it's like the PS2 version, but portable. And because it's shipping simultaneously with the *Episode III* DVD November 1.

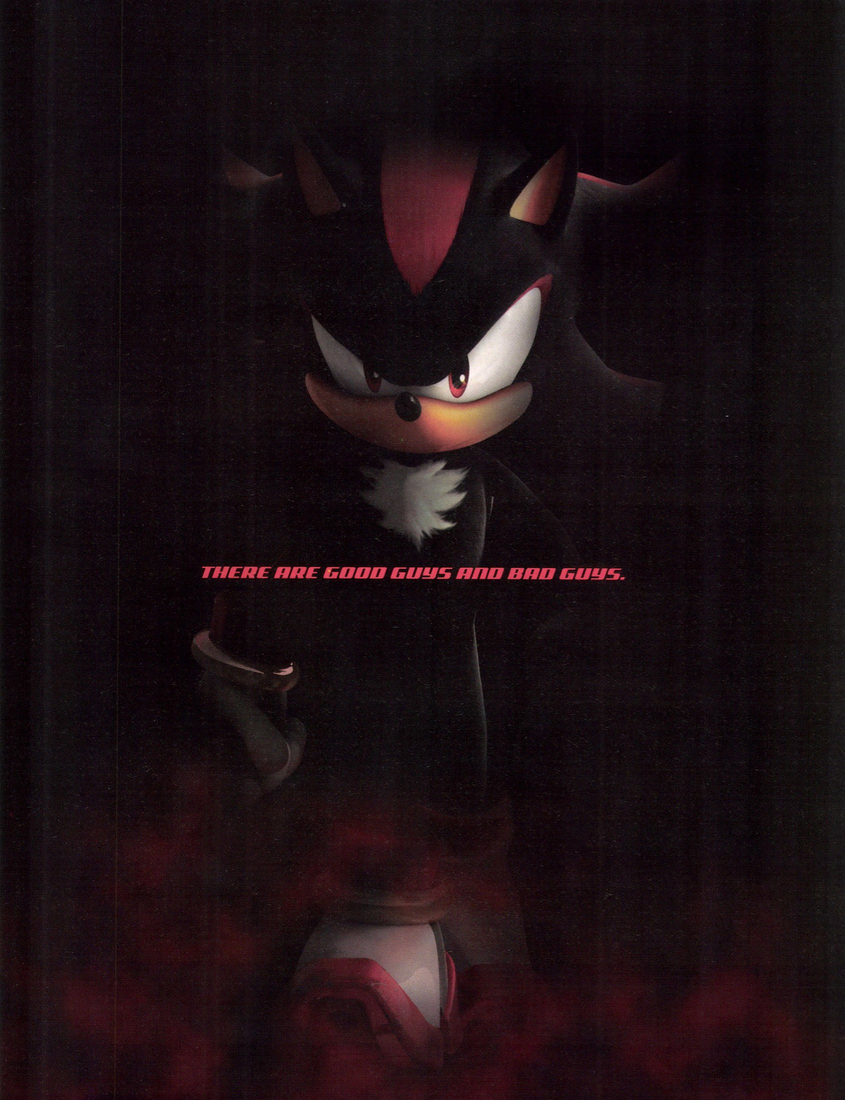
Sure it's *Star Wars*, but we're just glad someone besides Rockstar is taking the PSP seriously. *Battlefront II* on PSP promises most of the open-world combat of its PS2 and PC counterparts, including nifty four-player co-op and competitive modes.

Battlefront II presents three campaigns with four to five missions each. In Rebel Raider, you're an Alliance hero in a capture-the-flag-style game. Rogue Assassin puts you in the role of mercenary as you hunt down your targets over four maps. And in what is sure to be *BFII's* best mode, Imperial Enforcer tasks you to *eliminate all Gungans and Ewoks* (Wookiees and Jawas too, but they didn't nearly ruin *Star Wars*, so they're cool). There's also Galactic Conquest, where you conquer the galaxy one planet at a time. In Instant Action, you'll engage in quick battles in and over (space battles, yeah!) usual locales like Hoth, Dagobah, and Coruscant.

The PSP version incorporates the PS2 and PC versions' new hero system (*OPM* #97). After you complete certain objectives or reach certain milestones, you'll unlock a playable Jedi (Yoda or Mace Windu) or non-Jedi hero (Leia or Chewbacca). There are 17 Jedi and heroes in all.

Of course, *Battlefront II* had us at "eliminate all Gungans and Ewoks."

Pub. LucasArts **Dev.** Pandemic **Release** November


THERE ARE GOOD GUYS AND BAD GUYS.

AND THEN THERE'S SHADOW.

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PlayStation 2

XBOX

NINTENDO GAMECUBE

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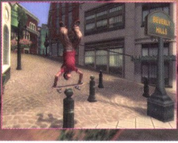

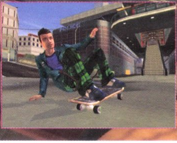

Thrice, from left to right: Riley Breckenridge, Eddie Breckenridge, Dustin Kensrue, Teppei Teranishi.

VITAL STATS

Name:
THAW soundtrack

Occupation
Fermenting sense of skateboarding

First appearance:
THAW

Why it matters:
This is the first *Tony Hawk* featuring a free-roaming map of LA, and so the soundtrack is going that extra mile to make you feel like you're skating down Santa Monica.

TONY HAWK'S AMERICAN WASTELAND

SOUNDTRACK MIXES NEW SCHOOL WITH OLD

Chances are, you're already familiar with what goes on in a typical *Tony Hawk* game, thanks to the fact that the series has spawned five sequels. However, in the upcoming *Tony Hawk's American Wasteland*, there's a new star: the city of Los Angeles. All streaming, no load times—you just skate and pull tricks from one end of town to the other. That sounds groovy, but what interests us is how Activision is working on another aspect of the game that will make us feel even more like punk skaters.

Every city has its own unique flavor of music, and Activision is working to innovate the *Tony Hawk* franchise by showcasing tunes that are representative of what you might hear if you cruised L.A.'s streets in the '80s. This fall, Activision will release an original collection of songs from *American Wasteland* through the Vagrant Records label. While the idea of releasing a separate game soundtrack is nothing new, this one has a twist: 14 current bands doing their own versions of classic '70s and early '80s punk songs. Such seminal groups as Suicidal Tendencies, Black Flag, and the early Glenn Danzig band the Misfits are being covered by the "new punk" likes of My Chemical Romance, Saves the Day, and Alkaline Trio.

"It's something we've wanted to do for a long time, but we needed the right game and the right partner," says Tim Riley, Activision's worldwide executive of music. "*American Wasteland* has a very Dogtown '80s skate vibe, and we wanted to match that."

Riley sat down with Vagrant Records CEO and co-owner Rich Egan and Tony Hawk to choose the bands and songs. "We made a wish list of the most credible bands in the new punk scene. We then let the bands pick which songs they would want to cover," explains Riley. "Our basic direction was that the songs had to come from punk bands from the '70s and early '80s, and they had to really fit the feel of *American Wasteland*."

One of the bands that fit the feel was Irvine, California–based Thrice, covering the Minor Threat classics "Seeing Red" and "Screaming at a Wall." "We're all big fans of the *Tony Hawk* games, and we used to skate a ton before we started touring," says drummer Riley Breckenridge. "We jumped at the chance to do this." Thrice songs have appeared in *Madden NFL 2004, NHL 2005*, and *SSX*.

Though Thrice is West Coast born and bred, the members chose to cover Minor Threat, a Washington, D.C.–based band that defined hardcore punk in the early '80s. "We've always had a natural gravitation toward East Coast bands, and we're big Minor Threat fans," Breckenridge says.

Tim Riley is pleased with their choice. "The first time I heard the Thrice covers of Minor Threat songs, I nearly kicked the windshield off my car," he says. "It was that amazing."

Expect the *American Wasteland* soundtrack in stores October 18. We think Los Angeles will be very pleased with the result.

Pub. Activision **Dev.** Neversoft **Release** October

CHARACTERS

Anarchy!

Following is the full list of bands, tracks, and the names of the original artists who the new bands are riffing off of that are appearing on the *Tony Hawk's American Wasteland* soundtrack:

Band: My Chemical Romance
Song: "Astro Zombies"
Original Artist: The Misfits

Band: Fall Out Boy
Song: "Start Today"
Original Artist: Gorilla Biscuits

Band: Taking Back Sunday
Songs: "Suburban Home" and "I Like Food"
Original Artist: Descendents

Band: Thrice
Songs: "Seeing Red" and "Screaming at a Wall"
Original Artist: Minor Threat

Band: Alkaline Trio
Songs: "Wash Away (Beneath the Shadows)"
Original Artist: T.S.O.L.

Band: Rise Against
Song: "Fix Me"
Original Artist: Black Flag

Band: Thursday
Song: "Ever Fallen in Love?"
Original Artist: Buzzcocks

Band: Dropkick Murphys
Song: "Who Is Who"
Original: The Adolescents

Band: Saves the Day
Song: "Sonic Reducer"
Original Artist: Dead Boys

Band: Senses Fail
Song: "Institutionalized"
Original Artist: Suicidal Tendencies

Band: From Autumn to Ashes
Song: "Let's Have a War"
Original Artist: Fear

Band: Emanuel
Song: "Search and Destroy"
Original Artist: The Stooges

Band: The Bled
Song: "House of Suffering"
Original Artist: Bad Brains

Band: Hot Snakes
Song: "Time to Escape"
Original Artist: Government Issue

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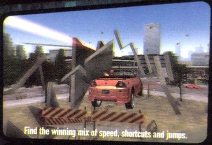
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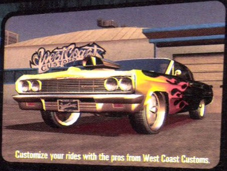
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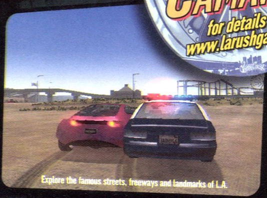
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RIDES MAGAZINE

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PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

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XBOX LIVE ONLINE ENABLED

TEEN T
Language
Mild Violence
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood
Mild Language
Violence

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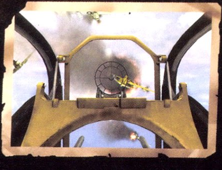
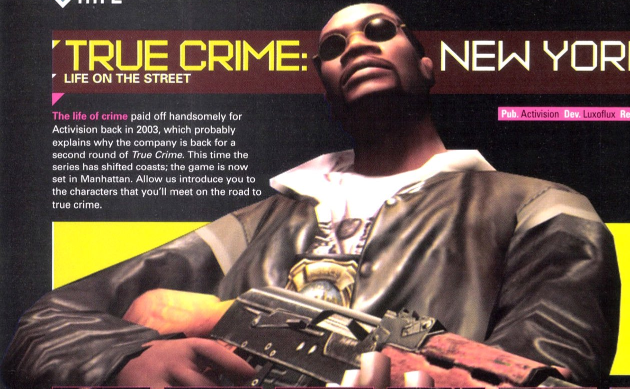


TRUE CRIME: NEW YORK CITY

LIFE ON THE STREET

The life of crime paid off handsomely for Activision back in 2003, which probably explains why the company is back for a second round of *True Crime*. This time the series has shifted coasts; the game is now set in Manhattan. Allow us introduce you to the characters that you'll meet on the road to true crime.

Pub. Activision **Dev.** Luxoflux **Release** November 15



VITAL STATS

Name:
Marcus Reed
Occupation:
NYPD detective
First appearance:
True Crime: New York City
Why he matters:
You play as Marcus in the game.

Marcus wasn't always on the right side of the law—his father is a gang leader, and Marcus himself was a gangster early in life. However, he overcame this rough start to become an honest cop. Well, at least he has the option to be honest: As Marcus, you'll choose whether to play by the rules or break them, and all of your actions will have consequences.

Voiced by Avery Kidd Waddell, relatively unknown actor

VITAL STATS

Name:
Isaiah Reed
Occupation:
Imprisoned crime kingpin
First appearance:
True Crime: New York City
Why he matters:
He's Marcus' dad and is still in charge, even behind bars.

Dear old Dad might be in prison, but that doesn't stop him from pulling the strings of his gang from his jail cell. If a deal can be made to get him out faster, Isaiah will make it, even if it jeopardizes Marcus' career. He's not all bad, though: When Isaiah got sent to prison, he entrusted his son's well-being with longtime buddy Terrence Higgins, one of the NYPD's boys in blue.

Voiced by Laurence Fishburne, star of *The Matrix*

VITAL STATS

Name:
Terrence Higgins
Occupation:
NYPD detective
First appearance:
True Crime: New York City
Why he matters:
The plot of the game revolves around avenging his death.

It never pays to be the older cop mentor; you're always doomed to die an unfair death at the hands of some shady organization or another. After guiding Marcus through his detective training, Terrence is killed under suspicious circumstances. As Marcus tries to get to the bottom of these circumstances, he is drawn into the underworld of Manhattan.

Voiced by Mickey Rourke, star of *Sin City*

VITAL STATS

Name:
Gabriel Whitting
Occupation:
FBI agent
First appearance:
True Crime: New York City
Why he matters:
He recruits Marcus in an undercover investigation.

Gabriel is the FBI agent charged with investigating the NYPD, which is believed to be harboring corrupt cops. After Terrence is killed, Gabriel shows up to recruit Marcus to help infiltrate the department and figure out who might be responsible for Terrence's death.

Voiced by Christopher Walken, star of *Wedding Crashers*

VITAL STATS

Name:
Deena Dixon
Occupation:
NYPD commanding officer
First appearance:
True Crime: New York City
Why she matters:
She's Marcus' boss.

Throughout the game, Deena will give Marcus assignments that he'll need to balance with his private undercover work. While Marcus can choose to neglect official cop duties, if he does, the city will start to decay around him. This can make citizens feel unsafe, which makes it harder for Marcus to get the things he wants from them.

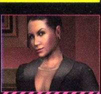
Voiced by Mariska Hargitay, star of *Law & Order: SVU*

VITAL STATS

Name:
Victor Navarro
Occupation:
NYPD chief
First appearance:
True Crime: New York City
Why he matters:
He'll be riding Marcus any chance he gets.

Every rogue cop needs a hard-ass chief back at the station, and that's where Victor comes in. Victor doesn't trust Marcus, which means that when Terrence is killed, Marcus becomes prime suspect No. 1. At the same time, Gabriel and the Feds are keeping their eyes on Victor, as they seem to think there's more to him than meets the eye.

Voiced by Esai Morales, star of *NYPD Blue*



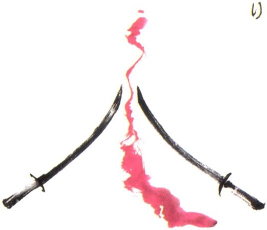
VITAL STATS

Name:
Cassandra Hartz
Occupation:
Madame
First appearance:
True Crime: New York City
Why she matters:
She's an FBI informant.

When you're looking to add some spice to the ingredients that compose the little salad of gaming, there's nothing like the old standby of the saucy madame. Cassandra gets nice tidbits of information from her stable of working girls. She then passes the intel along to Gabriel; in exchange, he protects her from getting in trouble with the cops.

Voiced by Traci Lords, recovering adult film star

THE ART OF REVENGE



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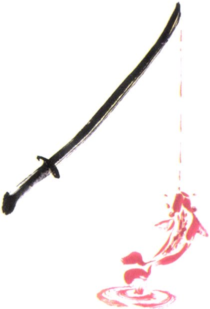

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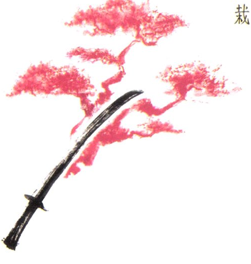

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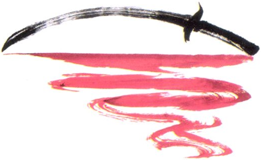
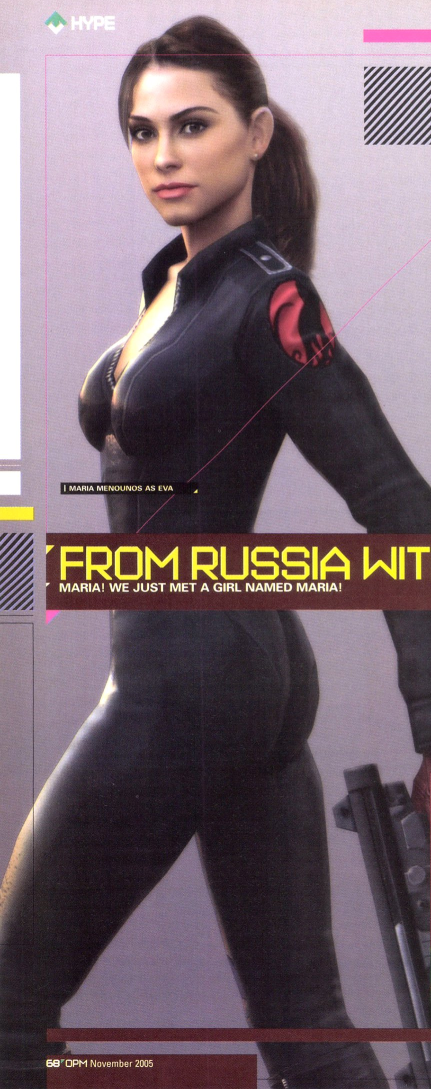


血の橋を疲る

FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

MARIA! WE JUST MET A GIRL NAMED MARIA!



MARIA MENOUNOS AS EVA

VITAL STATS
Name:
Eva
Occupation:
Henchwoman
First appearance:
From Russia With Love (the game)
Why she matters:
She's being played by Maria Menounos...and just look at her!

"I play Eva," coos *Entertainment Tonight* correspondent Maria Menounos, "I'm a bad girl. I carry a gun."

Adding her name to an elite list that includes such legendary beauties as Ursula Andress, Barbara Bach, and Halle Berry, Menounos is the latest Bond girl. More precisely, she's the latest Bond girl in EA Games' PS2 remake of the classic 1963 James Bond film *From Russia With Love*.

"Eva is an original character created just for the game. She's a henchwoman for Red Grant, the main villain from the movie played by Robert Shaw," the Greek-born, Boston-raised Menounos explains. "She's evil and aggressive and out to stop Bond at any cost."

That's a heavy order considering she's up against none other than the great Sean Connery, who, at least in voice, is reprising his role as Bond for the game. *From Russia With Love* is the follow-up to 2003's *Everything or Nothing*. It's a third-person action-adventure in which you'll guide Bond through a plot that roughly follows the events of the film. In a recent look at the game, we saw Bond complete a stealth mission where he had to negotiate a hedge maze by disabling SPECTRE guards' radios, then take them out in melee combat. In another level, set in Istanbul, we got a taste of vehicle combat—the driving was smooth and weapon selection robust with machine guns, tire rams, and missiles.

But back to Eva. Is she playable? "Yes, you can play me," Menounos says, "but only in the multiplayer version." You'll choose Eva from an initial 10 characters (more can be unlocked) in splitscreen deathmatches, including the capture-the-flag Sabotage; Hitman, a tag variation where you score points by eliminating the hit man; and the potentially awesome Dogfight, a jetpack melee.

As to the burning question of whether or not Menounos plays games herself, the answer is yes. "I've been playing *Dead or Alive Ultimate* on the Xbox," she says. "A lot of my guy friends are very enthusiastic about teaching me to play games. I'm their sponge. It's very important to learn to game. It's like the new golf."

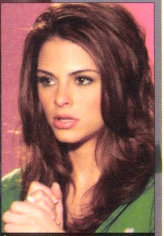
To which Bond might say, "Scha-wiingg!"

Pub. EA Games **Dev.** EA Games **Release** November

BOND'S WOMEN

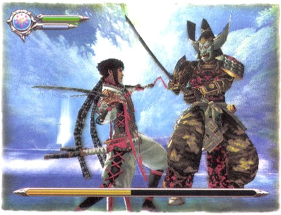
Maria Menounos joins a growing roster of Bond girls who have never appeared in an actual *Bond* film—only in the EA games and only as their virtual selves.

- Singer Mya Harrison played agent Mya Starling in *Everything or Nothing*.
- Actress Shannon Elizabeth played good girl Serena St. Germaine in *Everything or Nothing*.
- Supermodel Heidi Klum played villainess Katya Nadanova in *Everything or Nothing*.
- Singer Natasha Bedingfield is playing nice girl Elizabeth Stark in *From Russia With Love*.

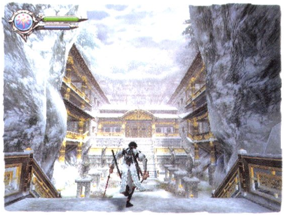


MARIO MENOUNOS FOR REALS

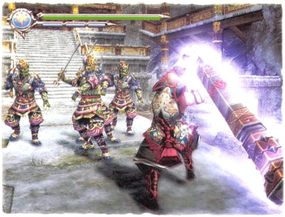
THE BEAUTY OF REDEMPTION



Experience true-to-life swordplay and motion capture by one of Japan's leading swordfight composers.



Journey through graphically stunning environments as the historic tale unfolds.



Developed by industry veterans who continue to innovate the genre.

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Like brushstrokes on an ancient canvas, the landscape of Japan lies peaceful and serene. Yet beneath this veil of mystical beauty lies a tortured people ruled by the sword of a brutal samurai clan, casting a shadow over the future. But there is hope, for within two warriors' kindred hearts burns the unquenchable fire of redemption. And soon their enemies will learn a beautiful but painful truth: the art of revenge is always painted in blood.

www.genji-thegame.com

MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood and Gore
Violence

PlayStation®2

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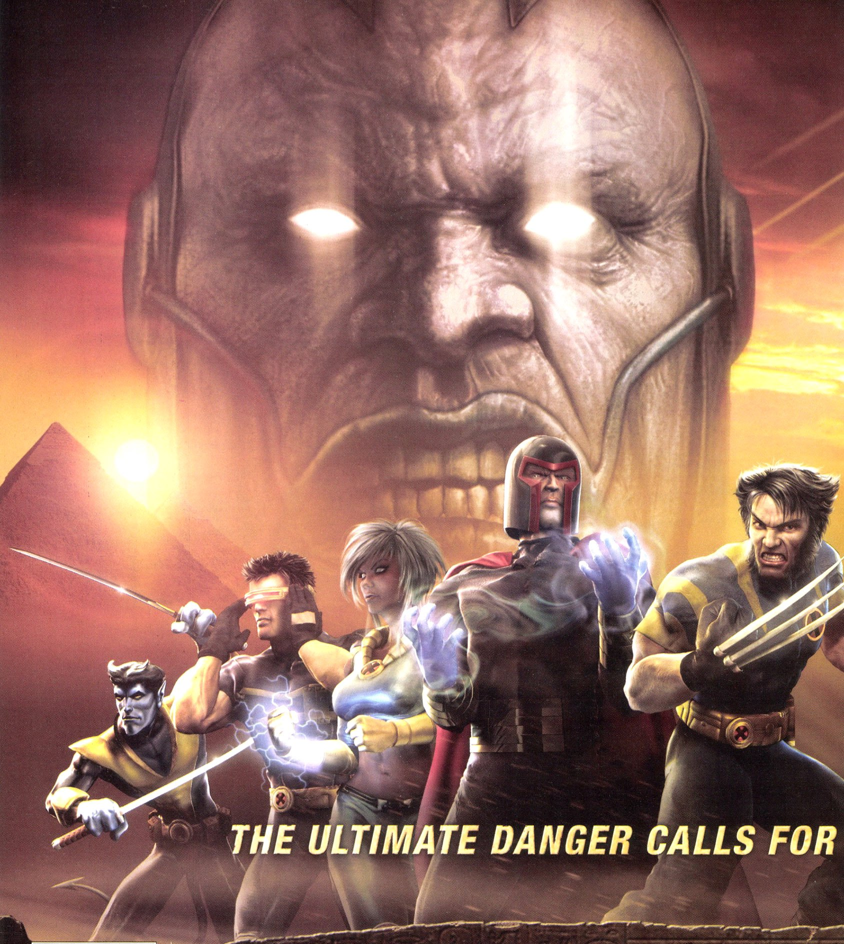
THE ULTIMATE DANGER CALLS FOR

TEEN

T

Mild Language

Violence

ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

Game Experience May Change
During Online Play

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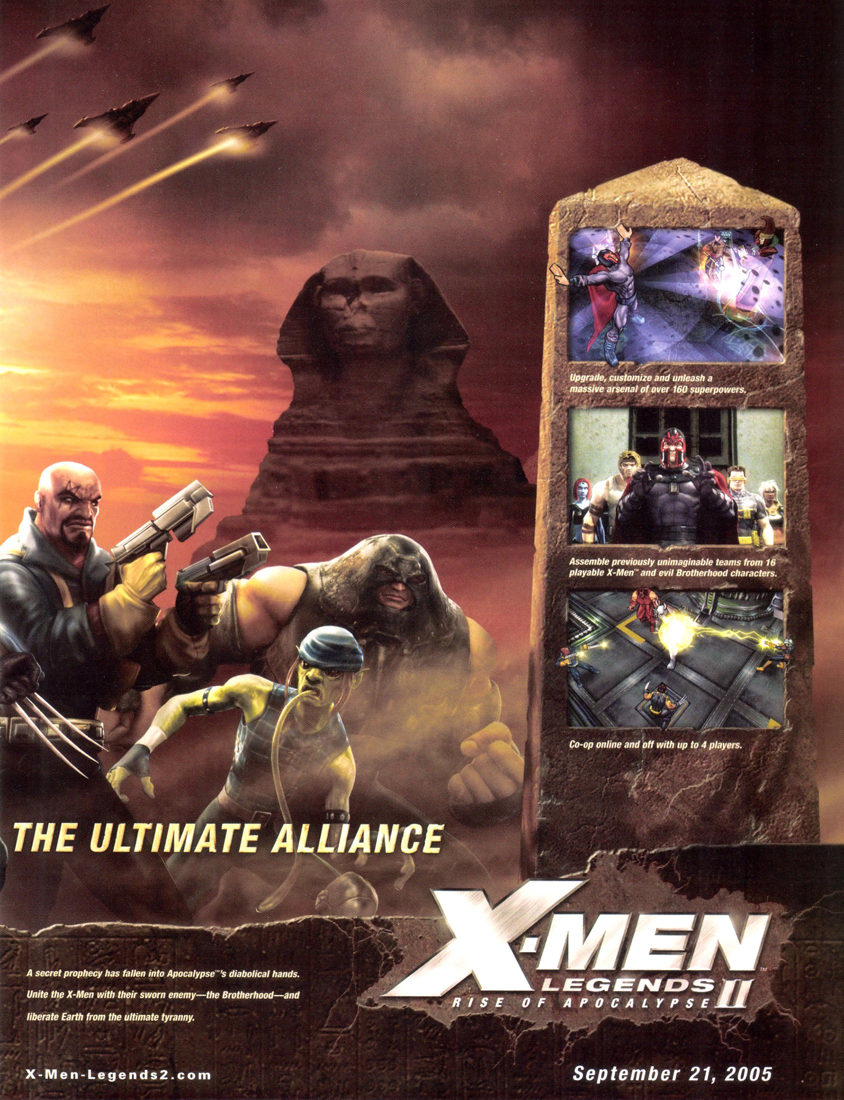
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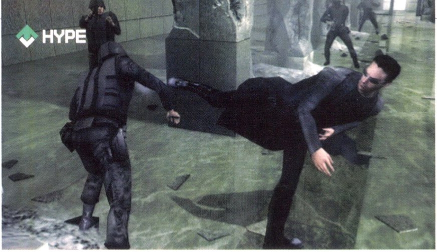
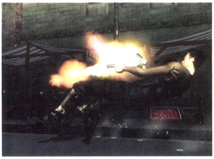
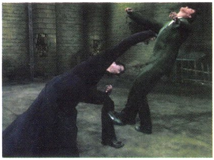
September 21, 2005







THE MATRIX:

THE PATH OF NEO

NEW GAME, SAME NEO

If you were unfortunate enough to play *Enter the Matrix*—quite possibly the most mediocre game ever to sell over 4 million copies—don't despair, redemption is on the way. Shiny Entertainment's second *Matrix* game, *The Path of Neo*, looks exponentially better than its predecessor. First off, you won't be playing as ancillary characters that nobody cares about (Ghost what? Niobe who?). As the title suggests, you'll be playing as Neo. Whether it's kicking butt or slowing down time, the action is infinitely more rewarding when you're playing as the chosen one.

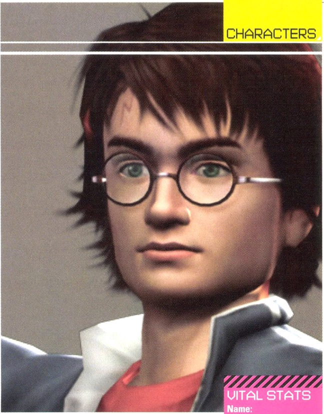
Think of this as the ultimate extended cut of the trilogy. Since you're not limited by the movie format, you'll be able to play things out for much longer and in more interesting ways. For instance, in the movie, Morpheus schools Neo fairly quickly in dojo training. In the game, you play it out as a grand battle spanning half an hour. Other adventures you can expect to see include the playground fight with multiple Agent Smiths, the battle at the Merovingian's chateau, and the final showdown with Smith.

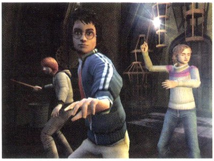
Being able to play as *The Matrix*'s main man isn't the only way this game is superior to its forerunner—the graphics receive a fantastic bump as well. *Path of Neo* is the only PS2 game that uses normal mapping, a technique that allows for incredible detail. The fighting system, (influenced by *God of War*) looks good, too. It's easy to pull off slick moves, but there's enough depth to keep gamers of all skill levels satisfied. It's fitting that Neo gets a *Matrix* game that looks and plays great. He is the chosen one after all.

VITAL STATS

Name:
Neo
Occupation:
Savior, guy who goes "Whoa"
First appearance:
The Matrix in 1999
Why he matters:
He's the only one who might save the *Matrix* franchise.

Pub. Atari **Dev.** Shiny Entertainment **Release** November





VITAL STATS

Name:
Harry Potter
Occupation:
Star seeker in quidditch, struggling student
First appearance:
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone
Why he matters:
He's trying save the world from He Who Must Not Be Named!

HARRY POTTER

AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE

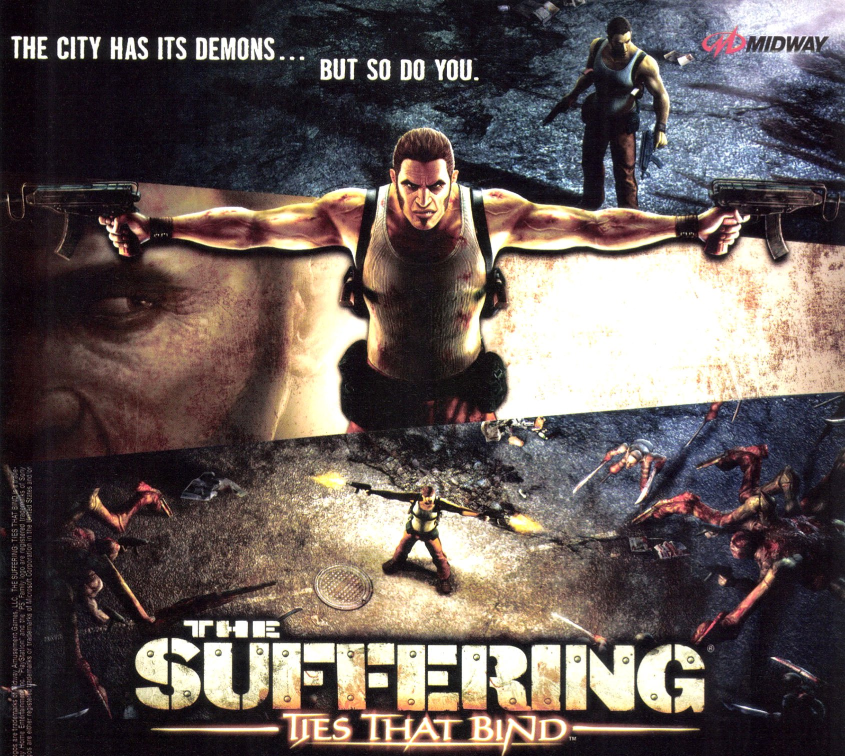
A WIZARD IS NEVER LATE!

Kids all over the place want to be like Harry Potter, and now they can not only play as Harry, but also get their two bestest Harry Potter fan-club buddies and have them play as Ron and Hermione. But first, let's talk a bit about playing as Harry.

As expected, the main game has Harry reliving events of the book/movie. To reflect the fact that the franchise is going a bit darker by this time, the game will be a bit more action oriented. For you quidditch fans, remember, there is no quidditch match in *Goblet of Fire*, since the Triwizard Tournament takes its place. Though, if you like to zip around on a broomstick, don't fret, as Harry will still fly his Nimbus 2000 around campus—one level simulates the first Triwizard task of getting the golden egg from a dragon. So while there is no snitch catching, there will be plenty of speed and weaving your way past falling trees and through sections of the Hogwarts campus.

We also got some hands-on time with the co-op multiplayer, which feels particularly inspired, with lots of frenetic action onscreen (three kids slinging all sorts of jinxes around while being attacked translates into a very colorful screen) and neat little puzzles that require multiple players to pass. For instance, all three kids must cast Wingardium Leviosa on a really big rock in order to lift it, and all three kids need to cast Herbivicus to make certain plants grow during herbology class. Of course, if you don't have friends in your local chapter of the Harry Potter fan club, well, the AI will control Ron and Hermione in order to help you with the multicharacter puzzles. So, both lone Harry Potters and social Harry Potters can enjoy the wizardly mayhem!

Pub. EA Games **Dev.** EA UK **Release** November



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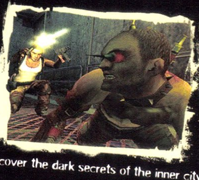
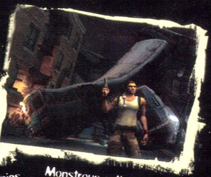
Now the battle rages on two fronts: in the city - and in your mind.



Discover the dark secrets of the inner city.

Fight teeming hordes of nightmarish enemies.



Monstrous action pays off...
with your survival.

MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Sexual Themes
Strong Language
Use of Drugs

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PlayStation 2

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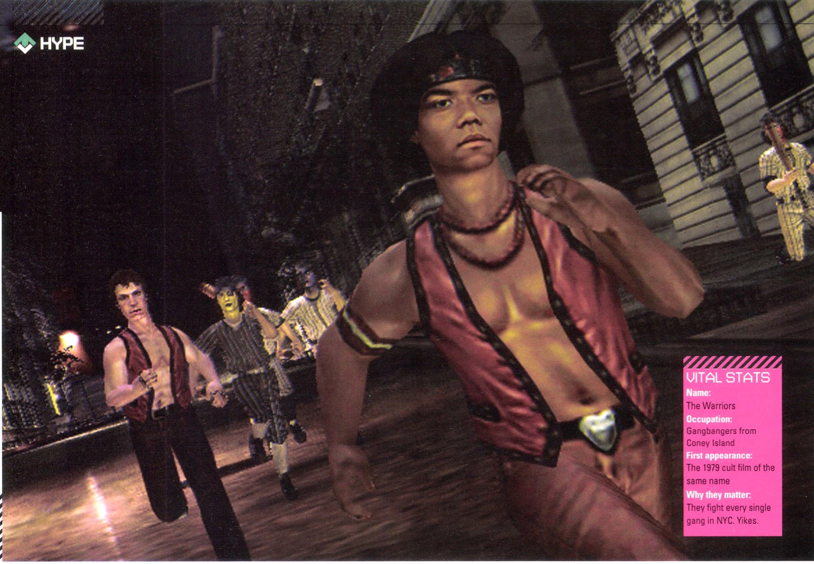


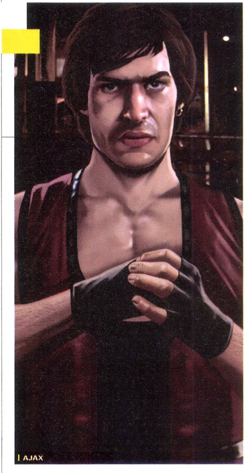
VITAL STATS

Name:
The Warriors

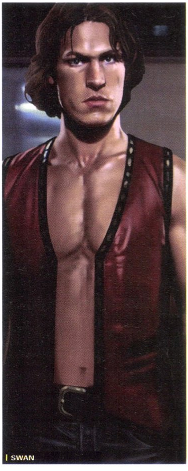
Occupation:
Gangbangers from Coney Island

First appearance:
The 1979 cult film of the same name

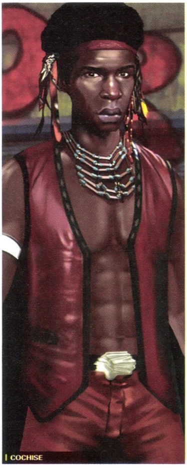
Why they matter:
They fight every single gang in NYC. Yikes.



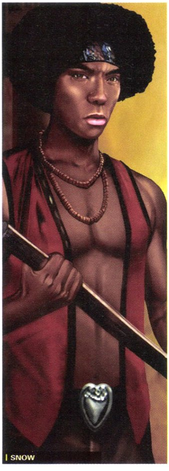
AJAX



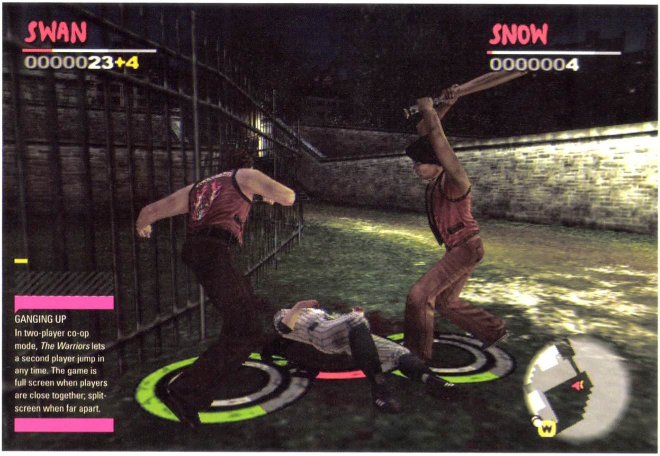
SWAN



COCHISE



SNOW



GANGING UP
In two-player co-op mode, *The Warriors* lets a second player jump in any time. The game is full screen when players are close together; split-screen when far apart.

THE WARRIORS

CAN YOU DIG IT? CAAAN YOOOU DIIIG IIIT?!

Cleon, Ajax, Swan, Snow, Cochise, Cowboy, Rembrandt, Vermin, Fox. In 1979, these weren't exactly the top choices in baby-name books, nor was there anything even remotely cute and cuddly about them.

They were the nine Warriors, the main characters in the cult-film classic *The Warriors* and the stars of Rockstar's next grand opus.

Set in grungy late-1970s New York City, *The Warriors* game is a third-person action-brawler (start with *Final Fight* but add more people) in which you play as one of the Warriors leading your gang in missions that weave in and out of the movie's plot. About two-thirds of the game is lifted directly from the film, with the other third added by Rockstar to establish greater context (one mission, described in detail below, explains how the Warriors were founded and how they built their street rep).

The game puts you in a dark, brutal world where hundreds of street gangs (if they're even mentioned in the film, they're in the game) are hunting you down. As you'd imagine, you'll be going through some pretty scary environments—late-'70s New York City was a bit of a pit, bearing little resemblance to the Disney-fied NYC of today; Rockstar is leveraging this in set pieces that give the convincing overall impression of "bad neighborhood." And while the world in *The Warriors* is a dangerous and bleak one, the story is one of hope—after all, they just want to get back home.

I WANT ALL THE WARRIORS

Core to *The Warriors* experience are the Warriors themselves. You'll play as each of the gang members at various points in the game, with the other Warriors acting as your wingmen, to whom you can issue a set of "war chief" fighting commands.

An early mission we saw reveals the founding of the Warriors. Cleon and Vermin were originally members of a gang called the Destroyers (a Rockstar construct and the only gang in the game that's not from the movie). The leader of the Destroyers is Virgil (also original to the game), and in this particular scenario, he sends his right-hand man Cleon, along with Vermin, to seal a deal with rival gang Satan's Mothers. But Virgil, jealous of Cleon's growing popularity within the D's, sets his boys up and the deal goes awry. We follow Cleon and Vermin as they work their way through the Satan's Mothers' warehouse enclave, in some cases taking enemies out with stealth kills (a method that Rockstar tells us was inspired by its 2003 game *Manhunt*) and at other times fighting them head-on. This all climaxes in a final boss fight with the Satan's Mothers' leader. Virgil's betrayal motivates Cleon to start a new gang, the Warriors.

Other missions we viewed show back alleys full of debris that could be used as weapons—bricks, bottles, blades, and Molotov cocktails—and the Warriors battling small armies of attacking gangs. Fighting styles in the game include street fighting, brawling, and kung fu, and the fighting system itself offers diving, tackling, reversals, counters, and tandem attacks, like when one Warrior pins down an opponent so that you can come on over and stomp 'em. You'll also be able to complete missions by distracting enemies (blow up a cop car and see what happens), move through the shadows so that you remain unseen, or incite bums to fight.

COOOO-OP, COME OUT AND PLAAA-AAAY

The most recent *Warriors* surprise is the two-player co-op mode. The developers are using a pretty slick trick to make sure both players know where they are: When they're close to each other, they're obviously on the same screen. If one wanders off, though, there will actually be a vertical split to let the two players remain independent (as opposed to forcing them to always be, at most, one screen away). Furthermore, the second player can simply join in at any time. To demonstrate how this works, Rockstar walked us through a mission based on a sequence from the film in which the Warriors find themselves trapped in the Riverside area of Manhattan hounded by the bizarre bat-wielding Baseball Furies, who they eventually meet in a donnybrook in Riverside Park. When a second player jumped in on the fun, the transition was immediate and seamless.

Pub. Rockstar Games **Dev.** Rockstar Toronto **Release** November

James Remar, the guy who plays Ajax (the tough-looking fellow pictured on the bottom left of this spread) likes getting work. He's been steadily playing bit roles in all sorts of television shows and movies, ranging from FBI guy in *2 Fast 2 Furious* to coconspirator Meier on a recent episode of the current *Battlestar Galactica* on Sci-Fi Channel. *The Warriors* isn't the first time a role of his is associated with both a game and a movie; he also played Lord Rayden in *Mortal Kombat: Annihilation* (it seems that the studio couldn't get good ol' Christopher "Highlander" Lambert again).

Smile Slime
Smile Slime
SQUARE ENIX

J-TOWN

GAMING NEWS FROM THE EAST

Scorching Tokyo summer got you in a sweat? Then cool off with the frigid PlayStation news scene! The summer holiday has seen the release of several RPGs, but juicy news bits are all under wraps until the Tokyo Game Show. Yet despite the drought, the J-Town show must go on.

Companies like Square Enix face a similar dilemma. Shareholders expect them to make money *all the time*. With a new *Final Fantasy* or *Dragon Quest*, it's easy to bring in the yen, but what's a megacorporation to do between megafranchise releases? How to satisfy fans during the months when no games are released?

Merchandising! Square Enix recently opened a temporary Character Goods Shop Showcase near its Shinjuku office, giving die-hard fans a new opportunity to part with their cash. The store had a steady stream of customers the Sunday we visited. Customers appeared to be mostly adorably dorky college couples and high-school girls in search of supercute character goods.

Much like Square Enix itself, the store has two distinct sections. The front part is dedicated entirely to *Dragon Quest* slimes. Akira Toriyama's cheerful slime design is absolutely iconic, and the deep-stacked piles, with their identical stares and strong primary colors, approach pop art. The Smile Slime line ranges from a $5 handheld stress-relieving slime ball to a $100 beanbag slime chair. "Real" metal slimes and metal babbles are available—and heavy. Slimes come attached to mugs, pens, cell-phone straps—it's a slime, slime, slime, slime world.

In sharp contrast to the colorful wonderland out front, however, the *Final Fantasy* room in the back is all business (so much so that photography is strictly forbidden, which is why we can't show it to you here—our apologies). This alcove is all sharp right angles, recessed neon lighting, and angular black leather couches banked by rectangular glass tables. Serious, attractive young women dressed like Turks, members of Shinra's elite "dirty tricks" brigade, staff the room. Expensive silver jewelry and accessories are artfully displayed in dim cases. The contents of the $300 limited-edition *Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children* DVD are spread out like holy relics.

WHAT'S A CORPORATION TO DO BETWEEN RELEASES?

The differences in architecture highlight the differences between the two franchises: *Dragon Quest* is fun, but *Final Fantasy* is serious—both in tone and in terms of damage done to gamers' wallets. The shop opened in mid-August and closes at the end of September; now that it's fall, Square hopes to sell some games instead. « Andrew Vestal

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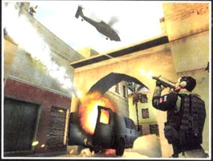
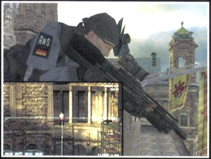
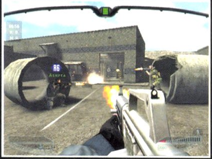
...a cheery online **battle** with a few of your closest pals. You **hunt** down a few terrorists, blow off some heads with your sniper rifle, and use night vision to **stalk** each other in the dark. In the world of Rainbow Six, only one **rule** of friendship applies: **watch your back** if you want to get out alive.



In single-player, hunt and be hunted by aggressive AI that homes in on the slightest sound.



New dual gameplay: Play as the lead operative and cover from above as the elusive sniper.



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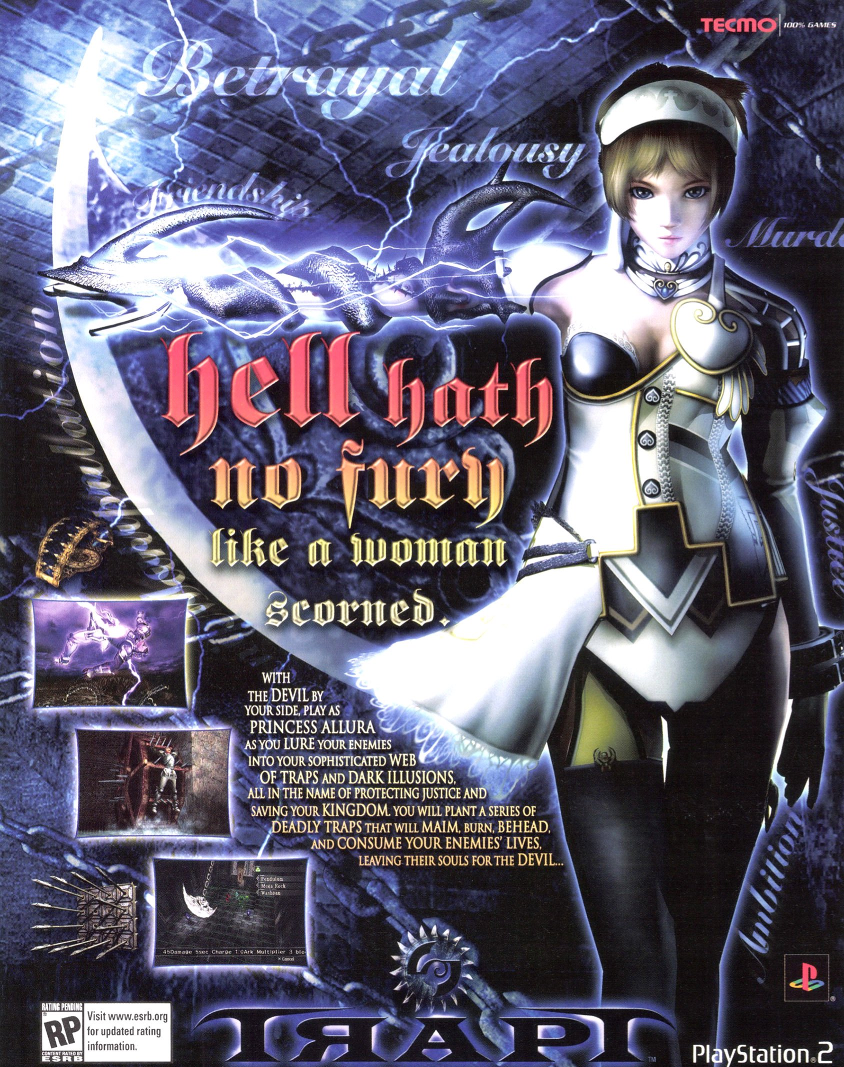
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RP
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PlayStation 2

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OFFICIAL U.S. PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE
GAME OF THE MONTH

REVIEWS

104>

BURNOUT REVENGE

RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINES

RATING KEY
Octagons. Stomps. Ocs. Blargs. Call our rating symbols what you will—just know that any game that receives five of 'em is something truly special that deserves a spot in your collection. On the other hand, a 2.5 is merely mediocre. And a 0.5? Well...at least they're fun to rip apart.

[●●●●●]

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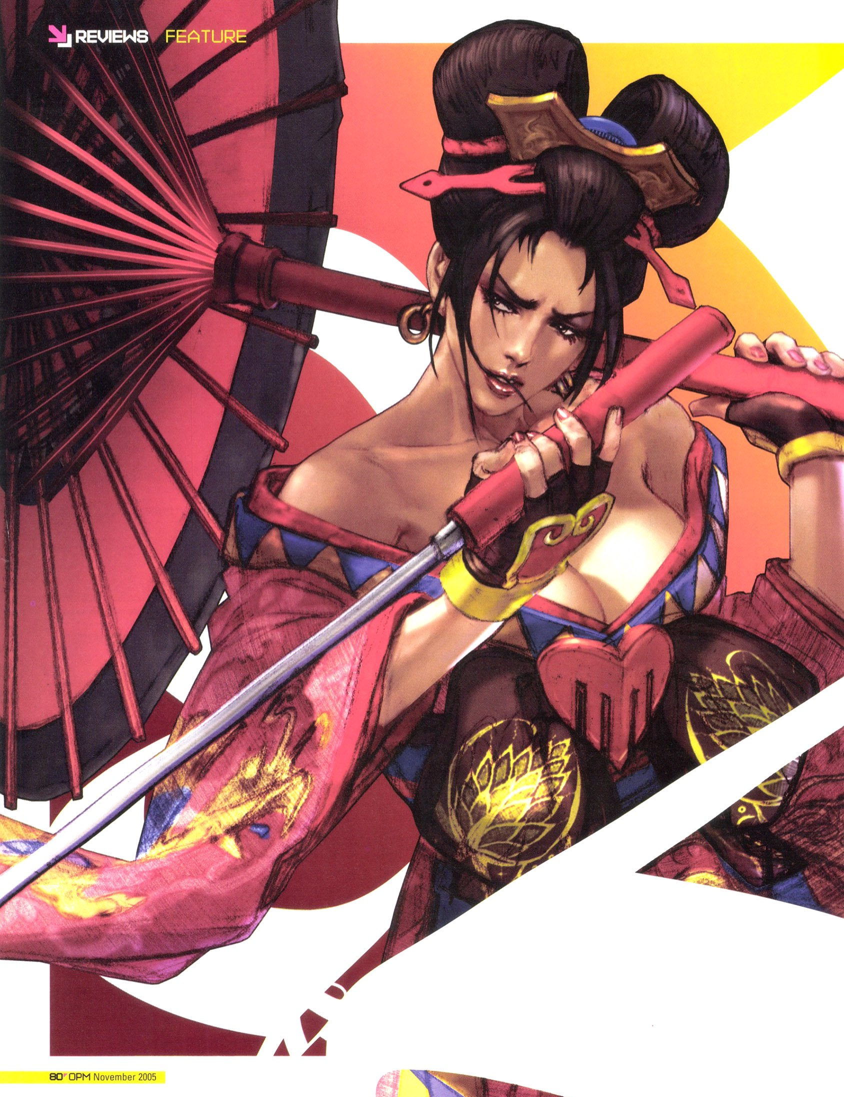


Soul Calibur 3

REVISIONIST HISTORY AT ITS FINEST

by GIANCARLO VARANINI

Few names carry the weight that *Soul Calibur* does. Since the arrival of *Soul Edge* in arcades and its console counterpart, *Soul Blade*, fans of the genre have looked to Namco's weapon-based fighting game as a beacon, something against which all other fighting games are judged. Indeed, with each successive game in the series, Namco seemingly does the impossible by improving what is, for the most part, a finely tuned fighting system that needs little in the way of substantial adjustments or drastic changes.

So it's curious that Namco implemented so many changes in *Soul Calibur III*. Yes, some are more drastic than others, yet regardless of how much of an impact they have on the game, the question remains: Why? Why make changes to characters or fighting mechanics that already worked so well in *Soul Calibur II*? The answer may not be immediately clear to fans who have been intently watching the stage of history for all of these years, but after you make the rounds with a few familiar faces, it should spring right out at you.

SC3 simply feels fresh, or at the very least, it doesn't feel as though Namco is trying to cash in on a name, as so many other publishers are prone to do when they know they can make a quick buck. Namco has actually made a strong effort to provide a new, but familiar, experience, whether it's with the main single-player mode or one of the several completely new modes designed specifically for *SC3*. In fact, with all of the additions and changes, it's pretty clear that the jump from *SC2* to *SC3* is far more substantial than any of the previous transitions.

Naturally, this means that the mainstays of the *Soul Calibur* roster have been subjected to some refinement, and in some cases, drastic changes. Characters that were merely clones of each other in previous games have their own unique sets of moves in *SC3*. So Nightmare and Siegfried, who are essentially the same in the previous game, now play quite a bit differently from each other, with Siegfried

Tales of Souls

The single-player campaign in *Soul Calibur III* is far deeper than it has been in any previous *Soul Calibur* game. For starters, each character has a fully fleshed-out backstory explaining what's happened to him or her since *Soul Calibur II*—or in the case of the new characters, what justifies their appearance. Unfortunately, the story elements tend to fizzle in the between-fight cut-scenes, which amount to nothing more than a series of unskippable non sequiturs. Not being able to bypass these scenes is kind of irritating, but there's a reason you can't skip them: Some are interactive. As in the ending sequences in *Soul Blade*, at various points you're given an opportunity to change the story line slightly or avoid losing energy before a fight even starts. But the biggest part of the cut-scenes' interactivity applies to the endings: You can earn good endings by paying attention and pressing a specific button within the right amount of time. The main story also has branching paths based on the direction you choose to take, so there's definitely ample reason to play through the single-player campaign more than just once.

retaining most of Nightmare's moves from *SC2*. Likewise, Cassandra, Sophitia, and Lizard Man all have new moves that help differentiate them from one another, though they still play more like each other than the aforementioned Nightmare and Siegfried do.

In fact, all the *Soul Calibur* regulars have received new moves—and some of the old moves have been changed around as well. Yes, some people are probably going to complain about Namco changing specific combinations or modifying the execution of popular moves. But once you realize that these changes can give you that warm, fuzzy feeling of playing *Soul Calibur* for the first time all over again, these sorts of minor complaints are easily forgotten. The learning curve is smaller for veterans than it is for newcomers, and the fact that a learning curve even exists is a testament to the effort Namco has put forth for *SC3*—the company could've just as easily kept all of the same moves for the returning characters.

The new characters are a different story. As you might suspect, the three new characters—Setsuka, Tira, and Zasalamel—all have completely unique sets of moves and weapons. Setsuka has the shortest reach of anyone in the game and is easily one of the most complicated characters in the *Soul Calibur* universe since you can't really button-mash any of her moves. Tira, who wields a sharpened hula hoop, is somewhat a middle-of-the-road character in that her moves aren't terribly complicated. In the hands of the right player, though, she can be pretty tough to beat because of her ability to string more moves together. Lastly, Zasalamel is easily the coolest of the three because he has many of Astaroth's hook moves to pull opponents in, but he also has some serious speed. All three are great additions to the roster, and none of them seems to be out of place, too powerful, or not powerful enough.

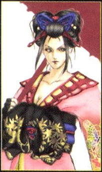
The one thing—or one of the few things—that does seem to be out of place is *SC3*'s speed. Casual gamers might not notice the difference, but the game seems to have a slight speed increase across the board. Characters that were lumbering brutes in *SC2* are now a little quicker both in movement and execution. That's not to say Astaroth and Rock have the speed and agility of a cheetah, but they are noticeably faster, which makes them even more dangerous than before. For hardcore fans of the series, it will be pretty disorienting at first.

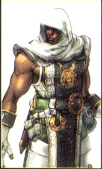
ALL THREE ARE GREAT ADDITIONS TO THE ROSTER.

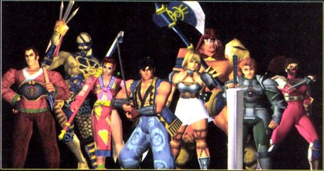
It's also kind of disappointing. One of the great characteristics of *SC2* is that both the moves and the characters feel like they have some weight behind them—as if an actual fight were to happen

The complete roster

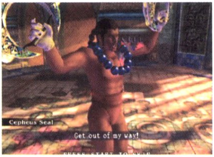
Setsuka, Tira, and Zasalamel aren't the only new additions to the *Soul Calibur* lineup. In fact, there are several new characters, two of which appear in the main Character Select menu after you've unlocked them. The rest of the new characters are unlocked in a similar manner, but they don't seem as "important" since they appear to have been created using the game's own create-a-character mode. You'll find some familiar faces in there—characters from *Soul Blade* along with some original characters from all of *Soul Calibur III*'s different modes. Unfortunately, these characters aren't open to you in every single mode, but the fact that they're available at all makes this one of the best rosters for any of the *Soul Calibur* games to date.







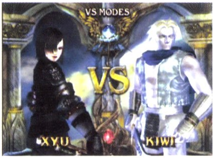
Viper Edge
Well aren't we full of ourselves?

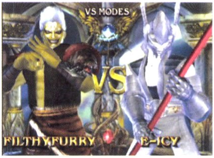


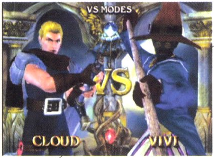
Qing Long
Get out of my way!

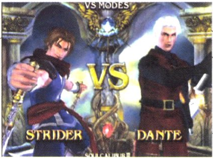
Create a Character

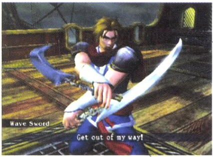
You won't be able to create anything too spectacular right off the bat in *Soul Calibur III*'s create-a-character mode, but once you unlock some additional pieces by playing through the single-player mode, you'll start to see potential for rather interesting original fighters. Of course, part of the fun is creating characters from other games. We managed to create a pretty decent Strider Hiryu from Capcom's *Strider* games, Dante from *Devil May Cry*, Cloud from *Final Fantasy VII*, I-No from *Guilty Gear*, and others. There are also specific parts for Namco characters such as Jin Kazama and King from *Tekken* as well as Kos-Mos from *Xenosaga*. It's just too bad that the mode's not quite as robust as the create-a-character modes found in *Tiger Woods* or any one of the dozens of WWE games, which give you a little more creative freedom. But the fact that you can choose only from preset fighting styles, faces, and clothing sets is probably for the best, since honing your character's look and fighting style without them would take an enormous amount of time.

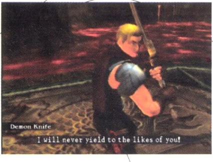


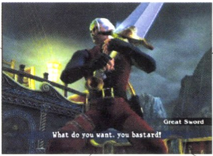












Can you guess which created characters belong to which members of the *OPM* staff? If you've been an avid reader, it shouldn't be too hard.

between a demon in a suit of armor and a nunchaku-carrying Elvis impersonator, it would look just as it does in the game. The combination of the lighter character weight and increased speed is not just an aesthetic thing either, because there is an impact on gameplay as well, particularly if you're using—or fighting against—one of the original characters. It takes even more time to get accustomed to the speed and get the timing of guard impacts nailed down so you can become an effective fighter. Plus, you get a diminished sense of satisfaction when connecting with a move that was ultrapowerful in *SC2* but is comparatively weak in *SC3*.

Another aspect of *SC3* that just seems a little odd—in comparison to *SC2* at least—is the graphics. First of all, the backgrounds in *SC3* are just spectacular. They're not only incredibly detailed, but also just so vibrant and full of life, easily putting *SC2*'s environments to shame. Also, the sheer variety of locations and the physical differences between various arenas make the single-player and multiplayer modes a blast to play through just for the purpose of looking at the environments and trying to pick out all the small details.

However, the graphics tend to take a bit of a dive (a very, very small one) when it comes to the character models. It seems as though Namco sacrificed some of the detail and size of the character models to create these bigger and better environments while keeping the overall speed up. It also seems like *SC3*'s character models are a little less gritty than those found in *SC2* and, therefore, less realistic. Don't get the wrong idea; they don't look bad at all, but there definitely seems to be a change in style that equates to a decrease in character detail in *SC3* when compared to the character models in *SC2*.

It's also worth mentioning that *SC3* makes extensive use of blooming and motion-blur effects. The latter is there to mask what appear to be occasional hiccups in the framerate, which happen about as often as they did in the previous game, but the blooming effect actually looks quite nice, particularly on the Egyptian and Greek stages, where it adds tremendously to the overall look of the environment.

IS THIS STUFF ABOUT GRAPHICS NITPICKING? YES, IT IS.

You might be wondering: Is all of this stuff about graphics nitpicking? Yes, it is. Is *SC3* still an awesome game? You bet. No matter what changes have been made and no matter how the game looks (and it does look great), the gameplay is absolutely top-notch, and it easily rivals—and in most cases surpasses—any other fighter's on the PS2. Just look at the number of extra modes in the game.

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T
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Language
Suggestive Themes
Violence
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47
LV. 3
AENEAS
LV. 5
XIAOXIN

BATTLE RESULTS
LEVEL UP!

Beauty Is in the Eye

The backgrounds are easily one of the most appealing visual elements of *Soul Calibur III*. In fact, we'd even go so far as to say that they're probably some of the best found in any 3D fighting game. Sometimes you'll fight in the fiery ruins of a castle or on the top of a siege tower overlooking a massive battle taking place on the hills below. Other environments are more serene, such as a mountaintop cabin complete with flowers and a mill, or an elevator overlooking the ruins of a once enormous ancient Egyptian city. There are also a few levels that were remodeled from the original *Soul Calibur* and *Soul Calibur II*. Try not to get too distracted.

Chronicles of the Sword

What jumps into your mind when you first think of *Soul Calibur*? Why, real-time strategy of course! While it's not as crazily in-depth as something like *WarCraft III*, the chronicles of the sword mode has just enough strategy to keep it interesting. Before the start of a battle, you choose which characters you want to take onto the battlefield. These characters include your own creations or any one of the premade characters. After you select your characters, they can be strategically placed in fortifications, but you can also move them around once the battle starts, to respond to enemy troop movements. Most of the actual fighting takes place on the map with your little character icons hacking at each other, but if the battle seems to be going poorly , you can engage enemies directly, which essentially takes you to a traditional *Soul Calibur* fight. It's kind of risky, particularly if your opponent is more experienced than you, but there's always a chance you'll get lucky and defeat him. It's a pretty cool mode, and frankly, if Namco expands on it in future versions of *Soul Calibur*, it could easily stand on its own.

Not only are there plenty of options to choose from outside of standard single-player and versus modes, but the options are actually good. The chronicles of the sword mode is an absolutely ludicrous addition to the *Soul Calibur* universe, but it works. Somehow, The designers managed to create a really simplistic real-time strategy game using elements from *Soul Calibur* and make it work. It's a pretty addictive mode, largely because it presents an opportunity to level up your created character as well as a variety of other characters that join the fight.

It's a great diversion from the main portion of the game, but so is the character creation mode. Going into this mode, it seems as though it's not all that versatile, and in some respects it isn't. The male characters don't have as many cool items of clothing as the female characters do, and some selections are pretty limited and repetitive, but with a little bit of imagination you can create some pretty awesome characters—perhaps even some that bear a particularly strong resemblance to characters found in other popular franchises. Of course, some of the pieces are in there specifically for creating characters from other Namco games. You have ample reason to play through the single-player campaign repeatedly, since doing so unlocks additional items in the create-a-character mode and gives you additional money to use at the shop.

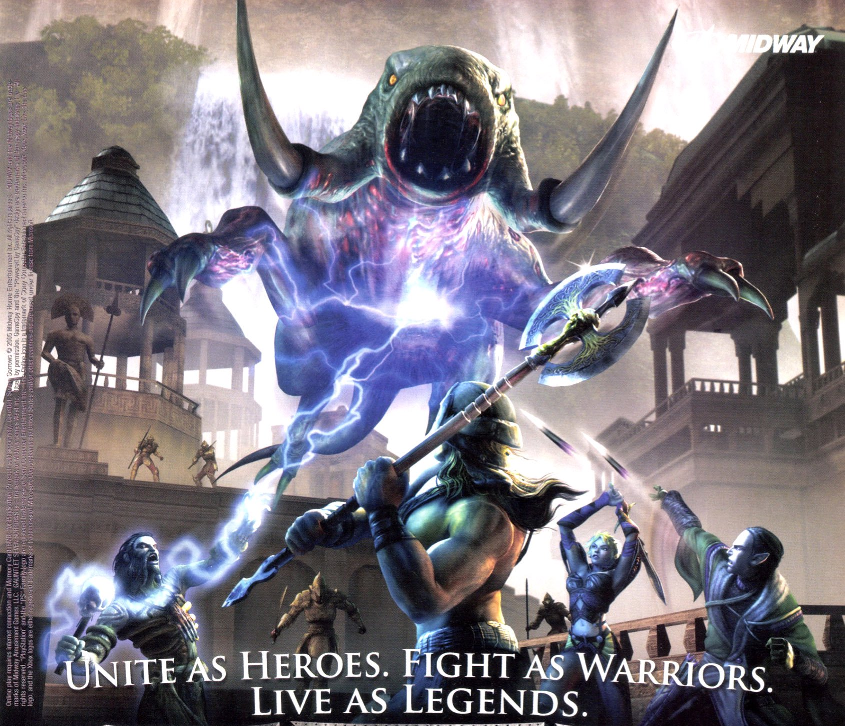
SC3 has plenty of other modes to choose from as well, including a world tournament mode that offers a pretty good challenge and a mission mode in which you can compete in special objective-driven fights. Actually, there's so much to do in the game that sometimes you might think, "I just want to fight," but anyone who grows tired of plain ol' 1-on-1 matches will appreciate the other special activities Namco has included for you to participate in.

In any case, we had some initial worries with *Soul Calibur III*. The changes to the speed, the move sets, and the feeling of weight initially felt as though they would have a negative impact on the overall gameplay, but while they do have an effect, it's not a negative one. These things make *SC3* feel like a genuine sequel and not some half-assed yearly update. No, Namco went all-out and put forth a tremendous effort, showing once again why the series continues to remain at the top of the genre. «

PROS Gameplay is as good as ever; fun create-a-character mode; mind-numbing amount of extras
CONS The changes from *Soul Calibur II* might throw a few fans off; character models look less detailed, but environments look great

Pub. Namco **Dev.** Namco **MSRP** $49.99 **ESRB** T

RATING [●●●●●]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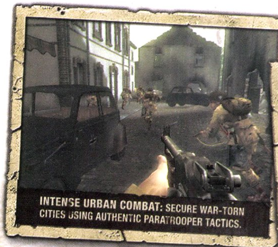
Red
6/16



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Intense Violence
Strong Language

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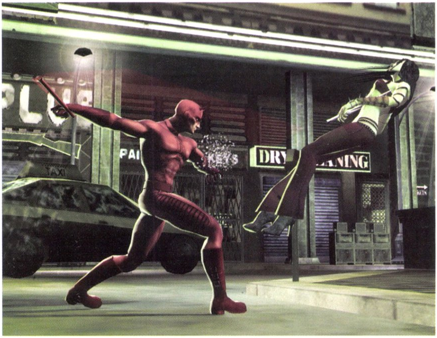


MARVEL NEMESIS: RISE OF THE IMPERFECTS

NEITHER GRAPHIC NOR NOVEL

On the face of it, the concept behind *Marvel Nemesis*—a surfeit of suited heroes duking it out—can't lose. Everyone from Spider-Man to the Thing to a mercifully Affleck-free Daredevil turns up. Tack on a single-player campaign to keep it all from getting stale, and throw in a whole suite of all-original characters to fight against the good guys. What could go wrong?

Apparently, just about everything. At first—ignoring the clumsy, five-years-ago graphics—things seem OK. Brawlers are usually entertaining for at least a little while because pounding the hell out of things is pretty much inherently fun. *Marvel Nemesis* also has a wonderfully wacky physics system: Enemies pop into the air from a punch or two, and bodies ping-pong around the levels into exploding barrels and cars.

Things wear thin quickly, though. I don't expect a brawler to be a bastion of creativity, but the pure lack of ideas means the single-player campaign gets dull way before it ends. The bosses are as cheap as cheap gets—which means going all-out is the only way to fight back. For a while, that makes things seem intense. As the campaign drags on, though, it becomes an exercise in figuring how to out-cheap the computer...and that's inevitably a boring way to play. It doesn't help that the so-called story mode packs so little in the way of interest—EA hired a real Marvel scribe to pen the tale, but there's very little evidence of it here.

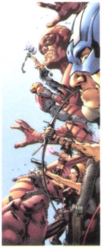
The murky visuals even manage to hurt the mano a mano, which was ostensibly the game's original focus. Everything's so zoomed out and the camera and gameplay are so spastic that it's almost impossible to read your opponent, leading you to inevitably mash on the game's Attack and Throw buttons while hoping for the best. You'll easily squeeze every drop of playability out of this mode in a session or two with a friend.

EA had such an opportunity to astound us with this immense array of heroes; instead, we got a half-baked game that doesn't do a single original thing. Even worse, it doesn't do the stuff you've seen before with much panache. It's not comic—it's tragic. « Christian Nutt

VERDICT The whole thing feels shoddy and thrown together. You won't even need a long rental to get your fill.

Pub. EA Games **Dev.** EA Can./Nihilistic **ESRB** T **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●○○○]



Marvel writer Mark Millar (*The Ultimates, Ultimate Fantastic Four*) was drafted by EA to work on the story for *Marvel Nemesis*. Given the general lack of interesting material, it's not clear exactly how hard he worked....

REPLAY
EXIT
TIME 00:02:39
FIXED VIEW

S.L.A.I.: STEEL LANCER ARENA INTERNATIONAL

VIRTUALLY THERE

There's been a slight change in our giant robot future. We're not actually going to ride inside them as we duke it out. No, we're going to operate them over the Internet, battling each other for fun and cash prizes. Or so imagines *S.L.A.I.*

Normally, the premise of a robot fighting game wouldn't be worth mentioning, but Genki's gone all out with this one. Sure, the cyberspace lobby looks like an early '90s version of the Internet future—all flowing electron bridges in the *Tron* color scheme—but check out the simulated lag. As you pilot your "scoot-vehicle," presumably from the safety and comfort of your home thousands of miles away, the control randomly putters out, stop-starting for a couple of seconds before returning to normal. Now that's dedication to realism.

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MISSION FAILED
PLACE : NEW YORK

META, META ONLINE GAMING

If the simulated hassles of faux online gaming don't suit you, *S.L.A.I.* features the real thing. And in a cool twist, competitors wait in the wings to replace any defeated bots midmatch.

0025
0062
DESTROYED
× 0001

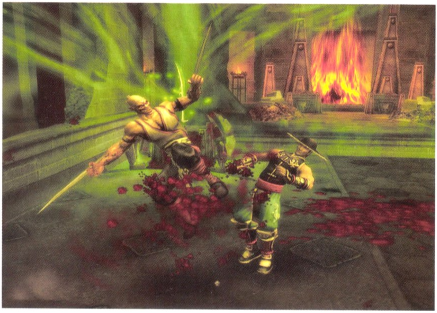
Anyone familiar with the brutal free-for-all of online gaming will recognize another realistic touch: As you make your way up the ladder of *S.L.A.I.*'s story mode, machines of a much higher caliber will drop in now and then to totally obliterate you. Since progress in the game is directly related to your bank account, repair costs for these beatdowns weigh heavily.

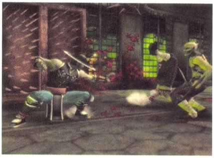
I don't want to give the impression that *S.L.A.I.* is all bad news. The speedy combat (when control issues aren't cropping up) is more action-packed than the usual turtle pace of mech games. And once you earn enough money to buy a decent rig, the battles become less trying and more rewarding. But it seems that too much time was spent beefing up the options instead of perfecting the core gameplay experience. I mean, there are three preset control configurations, tons of robot parts, and a mass of customization options to tweak, but the game all this glitter is glued to is withered and weak. « Robert Ashley

VERDICT If tweaking out on robo-parts is your thing, proceed. If serious robo-combat is your thing, abort.

Pub. Konami **Dev.** Genki **ESRB** T **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●○○○]





MORTAL KOMBAT: SHAOLIN MONKS

WAIT, A GOOD MK SIDE STORY?

Regardless of what you think of the *Mortal Kombat* series, one thing has remained constant—the fighting games have generally ranged from decent to good, while the side stories based on the franchise have been completely terrible. So, you might understand why someone would approach *Shaolin Monks*—the latest side story—with a little trepidation given this track record.

Fortunately, this fear is quickly laid to rest. *Mortal Kombat: Shaolin Monks* is surprisingly fun and has so many cool little *Mortal Kombat* touches in it that fans of the series should absolutely not miss out. What makes it so much better than previous failed attempts at *Mortal Kombat* side quests is the great level design, which features dozens of excellent puzzles. The funny thing is that if you're an *MK* fan, then some of these puzzles will be a little easier for you to solve, particularly the ones found in areas that are remakes of levels in *Mortal Kombat II* (which is an unlockable extra in the game). These puzzles are also designed well enough so that even if you've never even seen an *MK* game before in your life, you shouldn't have any problems solving them, because they're mostly based on the different fatalities you learn as the game progresses. Yes, every single possible gruesome death you could imagine plays a role in *Shaolin Monks*.

But when it comes down to it, *Shaolin Monks* is just plain old fun. The combination system is simple, but the AI is also tweaked so that you can't constantly use the same attacks over and over again—though repeatedly juggling an enemy in the air is quite entertaining. There are also tons of secrets and extra moves to give you incentive to revisit areas after you've gained new abilities, and the cooperative mode is a blast, especially since a good portion of the secrets can't be accessed without the help of another player. Of course, the game's simplistic look and occasionally spotty camera might be a turnoff for some, but the pure fun the game provides easily overrides these shortcomings. « *Giancarlo Varanini*

PROS Fun and simple gameplay, great puzzles, excellent cooperative mode

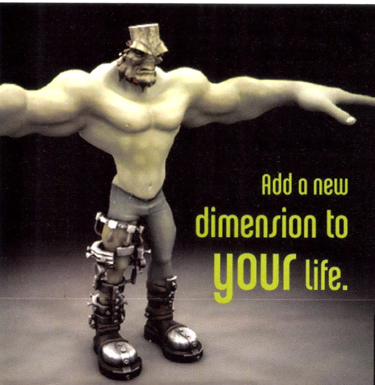
CONS Looks a little dated, camera can be a problem sometimes

Pub. Midway **Dev.** Midway **ESRB** M **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [○○○○●]

BACKSTORY

One of the many great things about *Shaolin Monks* is that it gives a lot of background on characters that appear in the *Mortal Kombat* universe, which is a little more fleshed out and interesting than it probably should be. Also, be on the lookout for some comedic moments and cool little details put in there for fans of the series.



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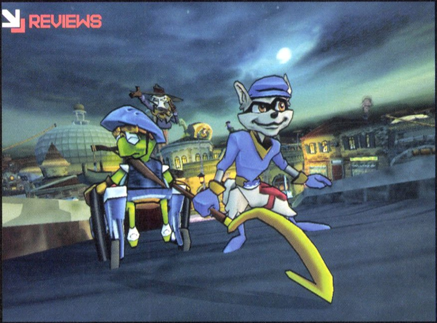
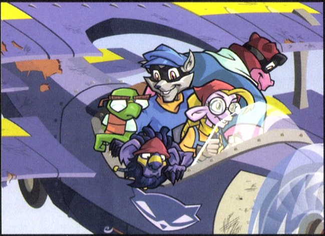
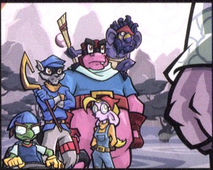
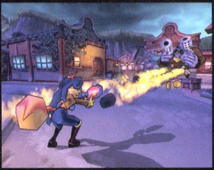
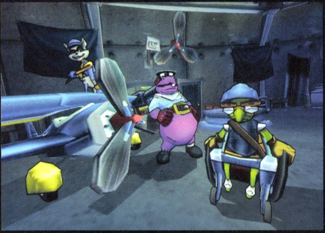
by Rick O'Connor











SLY 3
HONOR AMONG THIEVES

DEVIOUSLY CHARMING

While the *Sly Cooper* series has never gotten the acclaim of Sony's other platforming franchises (*Ratchet*, *Jak*), that should in no way be taken as an indication of the games' quality. Though it hasn't ever broken new ground in the genre, the series has always been well executed and intelligent, and this time around is no exception.

As *Sly 3* begins, the gang is scheming how to break into the family Cooper vault; however, the gang is a little different than we last left it. Bentley was injured by the explosion at the end of *Sly 2* and is now wheelchair-bound, and Murray, guilt-ridden over failing to protect Bentley, has run off to Australia and is studying with a guru to become more enlightened. The story follows an *Ocean's 11*–style plot, as Sly and Bentley woo Murray back and then begin recruiting fellow criminals (including former nemeses Dimitri and Panda King) to help them pull off the job.

One of this series' particular charms for me is the engaging story—it's rare to see games, especially platformers, delve this deeply into their characters' backgrounds and motivations. Between this and the excellent graphics, I actually enjoy watching the cutscenes, something to which I am typically allergic.

One of the game's hyped new additions was that of 3D levels (glasses come included with the game). To be honest, they didn't do much for me; in fact, after the first time, I opted to go non-3D because I found it more of a hindrance than an enjoyment.

Sly 2 saw the additions of Bentley and Murray as playable characters, and *Sly 3* ups the ante by offering you the chance to play as the new gang members and Carmelita. While none of these new characters has a fleshed-out set of moves, they do add another dimension to the gameplay. This is particularly enjoyable when you're working on a multipart job and get to play as multiple characters to accomplish one common goal at the end.

Also new is the two-player mode, which offers four minigames. These are somewhat hit or miss—the mode where you face off against each other as Sly and Carmelita is pretty fun, but the mode in which you try and sink each other's boats just feels pointless.

It's still a good game, though, and one of the few out there that's fun for families to play together—the content is safe for children but smart enough for adults too. Though on this, the third time around, the game's template is starting to feel a tad formulaic, it's still a formula that works well, and fans of the series should be well pleased. « *Dana Jongewaard*

VERDICT A high quality, well-executed game that platform fans of all ages can enjoy.

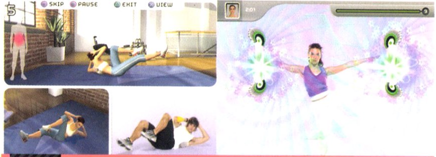
Pub. Sony CEA **Dev.** Sucker Punch **ESRB** E **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●●●◐]

PlayStation
PlayStation.2

PLAY IT

This month's disc features a *Sly 3* demo with three missions. In one, you play as the Guru, a Rasta-fied koala; in another, the three original gang members throw down in a bar fight; in the third, try your hand at flying the biplane. Also available is the best of the two-player modes, Sly versus Carmelita.



EYETOY: KINETIC
THE FUTURE OF GETTING PHYSICAL

Videogames are often villainized as one of the leading factors behind children's obesity, so a game like *EyeToy: Kinetic*, which is a workout program structured around minigames, is a nice industry PR boost.

Thanks to a snap-on lens included with the game, the EyeToy can capture your entire body. *Kinetic* lets you customize your own workout session from four types of activities (cardio, combat, toning, and mind and body), or you can have the game develop a 12-week program based on your input. With different intensity levels, two trainers, specific fitness information, and multiple music options, this is an amazing glimpse into what the future of home workouts could be. While DVDs quickly get stale and repetitious, this provides an infinite amount of fun variety to keep you from getting bored in your fitness routine.

There are still some kinks to be worked out, however. I often needed to adjust the height of the camera between routines, and I had to shove all the furniture in my good-sized (by city standards) living room to be able to get far enough back from the television. Also, a few of the games just were not responding that accurately to my motions. However, this is an awesome first step, and I'm really looking forward to seeing what next-gen iterations of *Kinetic* can become. « *Dana Jongewaard*

MUSCLE Good game variety, nice customization options
FLAB Camera doesn't always perform up to par

Pub. Sony CEA **Dev.** Sony CEE **ESRB** E **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●●○]

BRAND AWARENESS

EyeToy: Kinetic was developed with the help of Nike Motionworks, which is why the game's personal trainers, Anna and Matt, are clad in Nike workout gear. It also explains the overall Nike-commercial vibe of the game.

NAMCO 50TH ANNIVERSARY ARCADE COLLECTION
BACK DOWN MEMORY LANE

Back in 1955, a company named Nakamura Manufacturing installed two rocking-horse rides at a Yokohama department store. Why does this matter? Because 23 years and a name change later, that company released its first *Galaxian* arcade game; today, you know this company as Namco.

In celebration of 50 successful years in the business of entertainment, Namco has put together yet another collection of classic arcade games. In addition to the usual suspects (*Pac-Man, Ms. Pac-Man, Dig-Dug, Galaga, Galaxian*, and *Pole Position*, which all appeared on PS2 compilation *Namco Museum*), this also includes lesser-known titles like *Mappy, Rolling Thunder*, and *Tower of Druaga*.

If you have always intended to buy a collection of classic arcade games, then this is as comprehensive as you're going to get, and it's a good deal to boot. So go be nostalgic! Now! « *Dana Jongewaard*

Pub. Namco **Dev.** Namco **ESRB** E **MSRP** $19.99

RATING [●●●●○]

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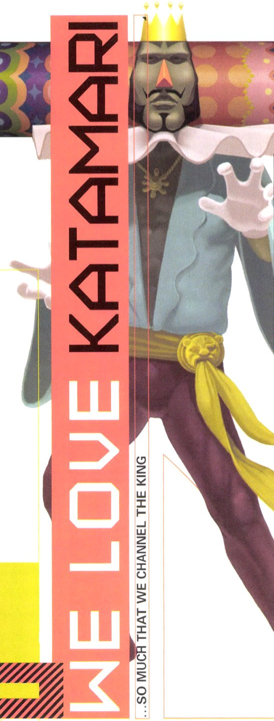
WE LOVE KATAMARI

...SO MUCH THAT WE CHANNEL THE KING



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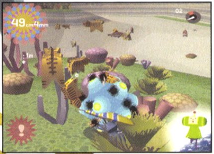

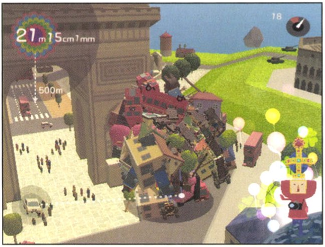

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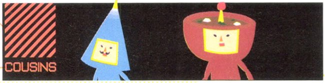


Yes, it is hard being the King of All Cosmos with all of the fame. The fame brings the fans, and the fans need pleasing.

Excuse us, can't you see We are on the phone here? We are SO not available. Oh! **Namco**, it's you...a new game...? We are afraid that it reminds us of a game We have already played...new levels...? We love new levels! Zoos, gingerbread houses, underwater—why, these new levels are the best We have ever played! Of course, We would like to have seen even more levels. Also, We would like to not have visited the same levels so many times. But considering it is you, **Namco**, We should not be surprised.

Hmm, is this what *Katamari* was like? We are not sure that making things bigger is all that it is cracked up to be...the sun...? You can roll all the katamari from the cosmos and roll up the sun? Why, that is the biggest of all katamari! **Namco**, you are not the complete failure your mother said you were!

Why, what's that funny-shaped bug in that katamari over there? Oh! It's cousin Miso! And there's another cousin, Huey! Why, there are too many cousins to count! So many cousins to help roll katamari for the King...different kinds of katamari, you say? Bonfires and sumo wrestlers and snowmen? Seriously? Score!!

Oh! We completely forgot. Playing alone is no fun. No, We would rather not be alone. It makes us bored...friends...? Two people playing at the same time on any level at any time that they want? What a fabulous plan! If We did not watch you do it ourselves, **Namco**, We would have thought someone much smarter than you had done it.

What? A love story? Wowies! We love love stories! The flowers, the romance, the beautiful music.... It reminds us of when We fell in love with the Queen.... Us...? It is a love story of Us? That is so hot.

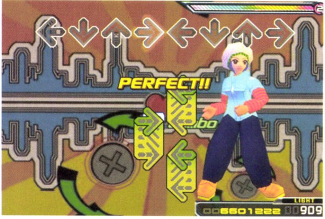
Oh! You're giving it to us? Really and truly? Fabulous! We are so pleased! « *Dana Jongewaard*

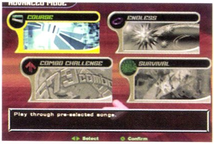
VERDICT This *Katamari* is delightfulish.

Pub. Namco **Dev.** Namco **ESRB** E **MSRP** $29.99

RATING [●●●●◐]

We Love Katamari is as much fun as three of these.





DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION EXTREME 2

STEPPING UP THE COMPETITION

If I had to guess, I'd say the *DDR* team might be feeling pressure from the fact that it now actually has competition in the dance-game arena. At least that would explain why, after all these *DDR* games, we're suddenly seeing some innovation.

The most significant change is the addition of dance master mode, in which you dance your way through a series of songs to earn credits and open up new challenges. Some of the challenges include special conditions, requiring you to, say, score 2 million points or rate above a C. But it's the shop that's the big change; this is where you use the credits you've earned to buy new songs, courses, outfits, and even information in the form of gameplay hints. Now, we're not talking about a dance RPG or anything, but it's nice to have a concrete goal beyond just scoring well.

I'm also a fan of the tweaks made to the workout mode. Streamlined and expanded, this mode allows for much more customization, which makes the game an even more useful aerobic tool—as does the flail-your-arms EyeToy mode.

The inclusion of a song list as pleasantly diverse as any recent *DDR*'s makes this a very solid package indeed. If you've never played *DDR*, now is as good a time as any to start. « *Joe Rybicki*

VERDICT The hardcore may gravitate toward more advanced games like *In the Groove*, but this is an excellent dance title for the rest of us.

Pub. Konami **Dev.** Konami **ESRB** E10+ **MSRP** $39.99

RATING

CYBERDANCE

Want to get your twinkle-toes on versus another human but don't have anyone local to dance against? No problem—you can now play online. The interface is fairly basic, but you can search for players to compete against at any difficulty and also take on ranking challenges to have your solo efforts graded against the world's best dancers.

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